

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952

FL11 Luo FL11

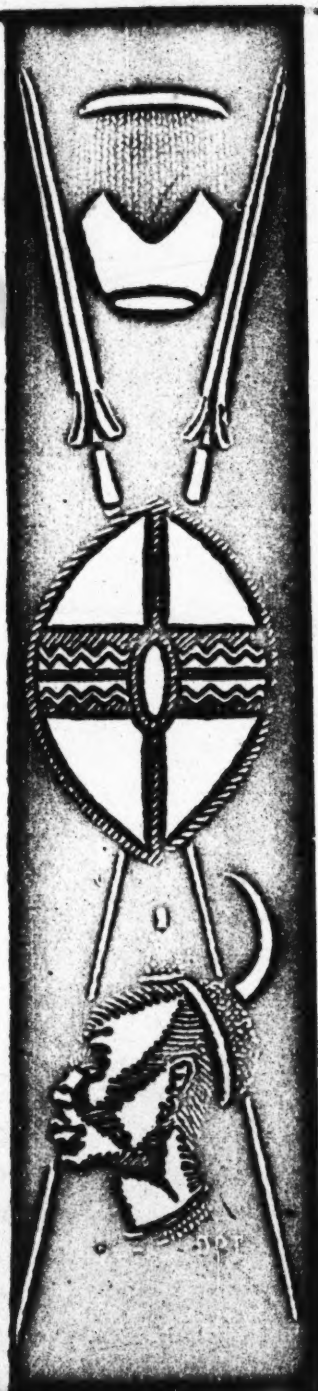
**Custom and Tradition
in East Africa**

**THE
LUO GIRL**

**From
Infancy to Marriage**

**By
S. H. Ominde**

*[Title Page]
[cover]*



000

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952

FL11 Luo FL11

THE LUO GIRL

000

FROM INFANCY TO MARRIAGE

BY

SIMEON H. OMINDE

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1952

[p i and ii contains no textual material]
[p. iii]

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952

FL11 Luo FL11

000

*This book is copyright in all countries which
are signatories to the Berns Convention*

The manuscript for this book was received from
the East African Literature Bureau

Nkd79
L86
952P

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

[piv]

FOREWORD

THE work was done during the period in which Mr. 114
Ominde was a student at Makerere College. The practical investigations were made in successive vacations, and Mr. Ominde had what advice I could give him in connection with these. He was able to approach his field of studies with the great advantage of experience derived from his own childhood upbringing coupled with the maturity and detachment required as a student, and this has enabled him to produce a work of real value despite the fact that he had little chance for a full study of scientific techniques before he began his work, and that he could not spend nearly as long in the field as he would have liked or the subject merited. By his clear statement of the conditions, methods and limitations under which his research was carried out he has ensured its value as a reliable contribution to knowledge in a field where it is badly needed.

It is to be hoped that he will himself be able to continue the work that he has begun in this promising way, and that his example will encourage others to do likewise in this and similar fields.

A. W. SOUTHALL

MAKERERE COLLEGE

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952

FL11 Luo FL11

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	v	000
INTRODUCTION	ix	
I. INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD (From birth to two years)	i	
II. CHILDHOOD (From two to six years)	10	
III. THE SCHOOL AGE (From six to eleven years)	20	
IV. ADOLESCENCE	34	
V. BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS	43	
VI. MARRIED LIFE	51	
CONCLUSION	70	

000

ILLUSTRATIONS

NURSE: AYOMA	23
YOUNG GIRLS GOING TO FETCH WATER	26
A SELECTION OF WOVEN PATTERNS	28
(a) A Grasshopper Trap	
(b) A Wrist Band	
(c) Pattern for the bottom of a basket	
EXTENDED RELATIONSHIP OF A FAMILY UNIT	44
THE WOMEN'S SECTION OF A MARKET	52
THE END OF A MARKET DAY	54
AN ELDERLY WOMAN WITH SOME OF HER FOOD	56

INTRODUCTION

THIS piece of work is the result of a survey carried out in Nyahera among Luo people living round the African Inland Mission, seven miles north-west of the township of Kisumu. This investigation has provided a basis from which generalizations could be made by comparing the conditions in this locality with those in other parts of the Luo country. 114 [101]

Superstitions—beliefs in magic and the work of spirits—are common among the Luo people; and it appears to me that any differences in the conditions existing in various localities can be attributed to the extent to which Christian influence and economic pressure have modified the people's beliefs and manner of life. 177 184 771

Local differences may also be due to customs acquired from the numerous tribes contacted by the Luo in their migration. Remnants of these customs and social practices may still be found in the assimilated tribal groups.

This investigation originated from a desire to study the social development of a Luo girl. I have therefore put forward such information as I think might interest anyone engaged in educational work among the people of this tribe. I hope too that it may interest students in attempting to solve problems which would further the advance of education and broaden the outlook of parents in relation to their children. 121

The material put forward leaves an enormous field for comparison, criticism, and independent investigation by serious students of Luo society. The nature of the problems dealt with may also make the information appear fragmentary; but I have attempted, within the serious limitations involved; to provide a structure on which

X

INTRODUCTION

121 later studies can be based. I have also worked on the assumption that a study of one's immediate background is an essential preliminary to wider investigation.

124 In conducting these studies of social life I have followed the questioning method, and having obtained information from individuals I later discussed that information with a number of other people. I was therefore able to check mistakes arising from purely individual opinion. Altogether nineteen women and eight men were interviewed with regard to family conditions and problems of inter-family relations. I also supplemented by personal observation the information given
123
857 me on the treatment and feeding of babies. When watching children at play I was sometimes obliged to keep out of view, as children normally feel shy when under the direct observation of an adult. The only group whose play I observed closely was composed of a child-nurse of about ten, my brother's son of eight months (born on August 26th, 1946), my sister's daughter of six, a son of four, and another elder son of about nine. At times I actually watched them playing, but on other occasions I had to visit their play-haunts and examine the articles they had left behind. I noticed that the locations varied very little. This small group gave me a good opportunity to study the play preferences of the two sexes.

123 With the more mature girls I was able to engage in
124 free discussion, making use of the traditional opportunities for conversation at marriage ceremonies. In short, my field observations were distributed throughout a range of life from infancy to maturity.

SIMEON H. OMINDE

MAKERERE COLLEGE
September 1949

I

INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

FEEDING

Under one year. For the first month of a baby's life its chief food is its mother's milk. But when the mother's milk is insufficient, gruel may be given as early as at two to three weeks old. Although cow's milk is now sometimes used instead of gruel, it is still chiefly regarded as a modern introduction by the missionaries in an effort to promote infant health. 853

Between the ages of one and three months, gruel and breast-feeding play about equal parts. When the mothers go out to work, suckling tends to be limited to mornings and evenings. The average age at which babies are given gruel is one month. From the third to the sixth month milk from the breast and gruel continue to form the child's main diet, but after this, gruel begins to prevail over breast-feeding. Although maize flour is occasionally used in the preparation of gruel, the usual flour for this purpose is obtained from sorghum and eleusine, a species of millet. Whenever possible a little sour milk is added to the mixture. Between five and six months certain children have frequent tastes of adult food given to them by their nurses. [177]
[797]

Although nurses are allowed to give gruel to the children, difficulties in handling a baby sometimes result in under-feeding, which is often made worse by the low food-content of the gruel itself. Through training by nurses, babies are accustomed to adult food before their mothers actually give it to them, so it can happen that [262]

853 when a mother is eating she will hear her child cry out
 [854] for some of her food.

From six to nine months, gruel continues to be the staple article of diet. In certain strict families adult food is not given until the child is over a year old. Babies fed on cow's milk begin using adult food during the first or second month.

[784] *Restrictions on the suckling of babies.* It is considered a breach of taboo for a nursing mother to suckle her neighbour's child. This restriction is based on the fear [76] that some woman with poor milk may, in suckling a baby, kill it. One of my informants pointed out that in [177] the early days of missionary work an attempt to break this taboo had failed. She said that many of the children thus suckled had died, and the attempt had been abandoned. One exception to the restriction, however, is [603] that of a mother-in-law. In cases of necessity she is permitted to suckle her daughter-in-law's child because it is assumed that her milk has stood the test.

853 In rare instances there seems to be different treatment
 595 of male and female children in a polygamous home with regard to suckling. Some of my informants stated that inter-suckling is permitted if all the nursing mothers have female babies.

[587] Nevertheless, the taboo against inter-suckling of male babies is reinforced by the fact that it is possible for a son to marry one of his father's younger wives. Hence a woman refuses to suckle a child who might become her husband on the death of the father.

853 The social restriction with regard to the suckling of
 [177] infants is still observed with rigidity, and there are no evidences of a change even under the impact of modern ideas.

Methods of feeding. No force is used in feeding young babies. A little gruel in a small container is put to the

INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD 3

lips. The mouth is gently raised while a small amount of the gruel is let in. Forcible feeding takes place when children begin to push the container from their lips, preferring their mothers' milk. 853

In forcible feeding, the child's head is rested against the mother's breast while the feet are firmly held in position between her thighs. If the child is difficult to manage, an assistant may be called to hold its hands. The mother rests the edge of the left hand below the child's lips and pours gruel in the hollow thus formed by the hand. While the child is crying, she closes the nostrils by pressing its upper lip against the openings. Thus in attempting to draw air through the mouth the child takes in a mouthful of gruel. The mother or the nurse may then dip her hand in cold water and wipe the child's abdomen in an attempt to cool the rapidly-swallowed food. After it has drunk a considerable quantity the child is set free. If the mother is present, it may finally be pacified by a short period of suckling.

Although women insist on this form of feeding because of its traditional value, it is also a method they use when they are in a great hurry. To have time to do their other work they must feed their children as quickly as possible. A child which has been given gruel does not cry for food for a long time.

The feeding of younger children is generally left to nurses, though often they are very young and lack experience by European standards. Sometimes a child may be found unconscious through over-feeding or prolonged choking. When this occurs, a responsible person holds the child by the legs, head downward, and then runs with it, shaking out the contents of its stomach; after which the child is laid down in a cool place to regain its strength. In extreme cases the child may die. Some children are quite unable to take gruel, and in 854 857

4

THE LUO GIRL

253 such circumstances they have to depend on their mothers' milk.

Although the time and nature of her work may force a woman to feed her child at certain hours, there is otherwise no fixed time for feeding babies. If the mother is present, the child is suckled whenever it wants to. Thus babies having such treatment grow up with a particularly strong liking for their mothers' breasts. As soon as a baby is big enough, the mother begins to limit her suckling and to increase the frequency of gruel-taking. The frequency of suckling is greater for babies between one and three months, the intervals increasing with the age of the child. Daily absence of the mother when she is working at a distance may also impose longer intervals between the successive sucklings than would be the case if the mother were nearby, or within the village. Children in more enlightened families are started on cow's milk after one or two months, and are given gruel after six months.

There is a widespread belief that gruel strengthens the bones, and therefore should be a very important article of diet just before the child begins to walk.

CLEANLINESS

254 There is a general slackness in the washing of children by Luo mothers, which increases as the children grow older, but sometimes, especially among the more advanced people, they are kept tidy regularly. It may be of interest to know that, in the past, they were washed early every morning in cold water in the belief that this would make them strong. Whenever the children empty their bowels they are cleaned with old rags or soft leaves. The limited supply of old rags makes the use of leaves more common.

Bedding and clothes. No clothes are especially made for the babies.

INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD 5

the babies. With the exception of a few children in progressive households, both pagan and Christian children go without clothes; and even when they have them their provision is meagre. There is, however, a tendency for Christian children to be better clothed than those in pagan families, and the latter continue to walk naked for a much longer time. 000
855
177

Bedding is scanty. Dried hides, mats, and old clothes are used, the child's bedding and the mother's being usually the same. Very rarely does the mother sleep apart from her child, and only a few modern parents form an exception in constructing small beds for their children. In the daytime, when asleep, they are generally laid in some shady place beside the house, or on hides, old rags, or mats. Those who have beds may use them, but the majority of children are placed in the open where dust not infrequently blows into their mouths. 513
855
[177]

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

According to the mothers interviewed, the earliest signs of mental and physical development in babies are smiling and lifting of the arms, actions which take place after the second month. This early smile may not be an expression of pleasure but merely an imitation of the mother, who begins to tickle her baby while smiling herself in order to induce it to smile. This induced smile is more noticeable after the third month. 856

During the fourth month, the child generally plays alone wherever it is put down, provided that it has no serious illness. By the fifth month the senses of hearing and seeing have so far developed that when it hears a noise, the child listens and looks in the right direction.

The period of sitting the child up begins during the sixth month, although trials are made early in the fifth month, while in the course of the seventh month, with

6

THE LUO GIRL

856 constant help from the mother, the nurse, and other members of the family, the child is able to sit up without support.

[854] The practice of straddling the child on the hip begins during the sixth month. From this period there is a rapid development of its manipulative skill. Between the seventh and eighth months the child begins to crawl about on the floor, and will crawl away from wherever it is seated. As the child's manipulative skill develops he begins to pick up things that attract the eyes, often knocking them down repeatedly. The mouth is also used in testing the properties of articles. There is thus some difficulty in preventing the child from putting dirty things into its mouth.

If a child is not watched it may eat a large quantity of soil, a practice facilitated by its surroundings, the floor and ground in front of the house being bare earth. It is [164] therefore not surprising that children of this age frequently suffer from serious stomach trouble. Even before [854] the children begin to sit up, the nurses, who themselves [857] are only between six and eleven years old, do not effectively prevent them from touching dirty things, because they are sometimes tempted to run away to play, leaving the babies to look after themselves.

856 A child is persuaded to walk by holding its hands and 868 helping it along. In this process the older person repeats the words 'Taa, taa,' in a monotone. The practice is continued daily until the child is able to walk; but as soon as it can support itself on its feet the mother or nurse may move away a short distance and try to induce it to come nearer. Every member of the family takes a great interest in all this and loses no opportunity to help the child.

According to my observations, cooing and the earliest symptoms of speech begin to come into evidence in the

INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD 7

eighth month. When Ageng'o was eight months old he repeated the same performance every time he saw me come in. First he clapped his hands, uttering a sound like 'Aaa, Aaa'; then he clasped them together, pressing them repeatedly against his lips while he made the sound 'Aa baa ba'. This pleased his mother, who was so excited that she spoke to the child in adult language. In addition, Ageng'o could seize two maize cobs, bring them together in front of him, lie on his stomach and push them round in a circle. 856 868

There was also a conspicuous development of pleasure when he began playing. There can be no doubt that he derived great enjoyment from pushing the maize cobs along, because that kind of play was usually accompanied by a great deal of noise not intended to attract the attention of anyone. Having scooped the ground with a stick, he would throw it away and, with his fingers spread out, sweep the ground before him. All this indicated the multiple experiences of a developing mind which aimed at satisfying its own curiosity by exploring into the nature of things. A child of this age has no fear of fire until it is scorched by a glowing ember. 856

At the time when the child begins to say 'Baa, baa, baa', the mother trains it to imitate sounds of names like 'ba-ba (babu, mama, mamu)'. But the use of adult language in talking to the baby begins as early as the first month. Thus when taking up a baby of one or two months, a mother may say, 'Bi mama' (come my mother) or 'Bi wuora' (come my father), according to whom the child was named after. This of course means nothing to the child at such an early stage. Following 'ba-ba' and 'ma-ma', it is taught the names of things and people in the family. Gradually a child gets to know these, as well as the words for a few things including food. Next it is taught how to ask for things. On the whole, children do 856 868

8

THE LUO GIRL

856 not begin to speak until after two years, when they are
868 barely able to construct short simple sentences.

DISCIPLINE

861 Formal training in discipline begins as early as the
955 seventh month, at the time when the child may put
some dirty object to its lips. Thus a mother, finding her
child with soil in its mouth, may slap it gently as she
removes the soil, or the hands of the child may be
tapped with anything convenient. A child crawling to-
wards the fire would be immediately pulled away, and
sometimes it might be frightened with the glowing end
of a burning twig in order to impress the danger upon
its mind.

856 It is never certain when a child is first going to walk,
164 for the conditions under which children are brought up
are such that it is impossible for them to escape being
seriously ill at one time or another. Hence the period is
largely determined by the health of the child. The aver-
age time ranges from eleven to fourteen months. A child
who develops very rapidly through the early stages
causes its parents much worry, for it is believed that a
fast-growing child never survives.

855 *Effects of the child's emotions.* The mother's attitude to-
wards the emotions of the child is based on the deep
[844] impression left on her mind by the strain of the birth.
Thus, I have come across women who told me quite
convincingly that whenever they heard one of their
children cry out vigorously they again felt the pain they
had experienced during its birth. A mother tolerates the
emotional outbursts of her child not only because she
loves it but even more because she struggled to bear it.
This seems to be the real cause of the so-called humanity
of women towards children in contrast with the indiffer-
ence sometimes shown by men. Instead of setting the

INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD 9

mother against the child, the child's emotions of anger or suffering have the effect of reminding the mother of their physiological connection. When a mother is unable to pacify her crying child she generally feels a quite personal sense of depression. 855 [152]

On the other hand, signs of pleasure in a child give its mother the greatest satisfaction. If a child has a happy nature, even the most critical of neighbouring relatives are pleased, and frequently comment or compliment the mother upon it. The desire to share the emotions of her children leads a mother to begin laughing with them and tickling them while they are very young. [152]

II CHILDHOOD

BETWEEN TWO AND SIX YEARS

856 *Physical development.* Between the ages of two and five the means of locomotion mature. Healthy children are able during this period to walk and run about, and, even as early as this, young boys and girls begin to show subtle differences in their motor behaviour. Female children are less vigorous in their muscular movements, while male children tend to exaggerate them. But on the whole both sexes make good use of this newly acquired power. There is an increased desire to move about, intensified by a wish to meet young acquaintances at play.

[855] The work of the nurse then changes. Instead of looking
[857] after the child, she does simple housework, such as fetching water from the stream or well, and collecting firewood. In place of being its foster-mother she becomes the child's major playmate.

From this time onwards children grow rather thin. It is assumed that this slenderness of body is a sign that they are growing up. It is also believed that at this time male children are stronger than their female contemporaries.

856 *Mental development.* The mental development of a child
868 of this age is marked by a predominance of fantasy play, and a rapid mastery of spoken language. The imaginative play occupies longer periods than the other activities. The child learns language from its playmates as well as from the conscious efforts of members of its family. The effectiveness of the speech taught by its parents becomes more pronounced while the orders given begin to be better understood.

CHILDHOOD

II

The next step is for the child to be taught the names of those who visit the family. By this means it also learns how to know the relatives who are not living in the family home. Children of two to five know very few people beyond the members of their own family circle. Thus Obala, at three years old, did not know who I was, although I had been to her home and talked to her many times. Her parents told me that this was due to their never having told her my name. 867

Feeding. The food children eat at this stage is the same as that given to the adult members of the family, the only difference being that the children are not restricted to feeding at particular times. However little it may be, a certain amount of food is always left for them in the pot. 264 855

The children go out to play when the adults go to their different duties. In the middle of the day they return much exhausted and ask for the portion put aside for them after the morning meal. When there is only one child, the mother, before leaving for her day's work, tells it where to find this food. The varied and exacting activities of a child of this age make food an important factor in its life. [857]

PLAY

The play groups. The child begins its association with the play groups through the action of the nurses. At first the nurse, next to the mother, is its chief playmate. Through her the child comes into contact with children from neighbouring families and thus acquires friends and playmates. Although it takes the child a long time to make new friends, its social life begins as early as the seventh month when the nurses, wishing to play nearby, seat two babies side by side where they may learn to play together. 857 572

857 As the child grows older it begins to play by itself.
593 Parents also amuse their children, but because they are generally away from the village, the children must either play with the nurses or by themselves. Before the child has learnt to talk, the play between it and the nurse is that of inducement to laughter or fright. Older children between two and five merely copy what the nurses do. These nurses, who are sometimes the children's own sisters, act as their instructors and demonstrators in the different play activities.

857 *Play activities.* Dolls like those existing in European society are unknown among Luo children. The children
524 play with things they pick up, like stones, leaves—dry or green—and many other natural articles. In short, they adapt their environment to their own needs. They mostly prefer bright objects, and after the end of the day's play they return home with a load of playthings. These they keep in some corner, ready for the next day. Thus the younger children go on day after day bringing in new toys and throwing away the old. As we shall see later, the older children, or nurses, make their own dolls.

857 Once the children can walk and understand other
526 children's language, the older ones may hide, calling for the younger ones to try to find them—a game resembling 'hide and seek'. Some parents maintain that a child of five is able to tell lies merely because he or she has had contact with older children already able to tell lies. But the habit of giving wrong interpretations to what they perceive is very common. Thus Otieno, having once suffered from a thorn-prick, mistook any hard object underfoot for a thorn. He was also fond of giving false alarms. I was frequently interrupted by the announcement of his father's return, and these announcements were often untrue.

CHILDHOOD

13

There is no rigid separation of the sexes in these play groups, although there is a clear distinction between the tendencies of the two sexes in any single gathering. The activities are largely imitative of real activities in adult life, falling into definite types, which develop progressively. 857

Female children imitate the activities of the women. They also imitate funeral ceremonies in which both men and women take part. A child isolated from its own sex may be found doing things customary to the other sex, with whom it spends its play hours. Male children build houses; dig gardens; mould bulls, motor cars, trains and carts. Female children concentrate on those activities leading to the preparation of food and care of babies. 857
868

Though there is no strictly-defined list into which all these activities may be fitted, it remains for future investigators in the field of psychology to discover the degree of invention and diffusion of children's play activities. At the moment we must be content with mentioning their main features.

In every instance the activities pass from simpler to more complex forms as the mind behind them develops. Certain of these games in their more advanced forms are carried out in hidden places because the children begin to take actual things, like food, for playthings, some being taken during the mother's absence. Hence, we find that the older children are afraid of playing where they would be observed by their parents.

On being introduced to the play activities, a girl-child might begin with the grinding of the soil, which is done over a small area of cleared ground. Later, the grinding is done on a flattish stone, a leaf being placed below to receive the supposed flour. This is an imitation of the mothers or sisters when they are grinding corn,

14

THE LUO GIRL

857 and is an imitation taking place even among children
 868 who do not see grinding stones in use. It is therefore like
 a vanishing feature of a culture surviving in the form of
 children's play activity. Leaves of plants or trees are put
 into a broken piece of pot (*balatago*) with a little water
 to represent either meat, fish or green vegetables in the
 process of being cooked. Small dried branches may be
 used to represent the fire, but actual fire is not used at
 this early stage. These are mainly make-believe activi-
 ties in which the children persuade themselves that they
 are doing real things.

In the rather advanced activities the younger act as
 servants to the older children, who send them here and
 there to fetch the necessary articles and also instruct
 them to keep the supposed fire burning. Between the
 ages of six and nine, female children, as I have already
 mentioned, use real things in imitating the preparation
 of food. Thus, during the mother's absence nurses and
 other older children may take corn or flour, water and
 salt, to be made into porridge (*kuon*). They may also
 tear off a portion of fish or meat to be cooked in the
 play huts, which are generally constructed in some
 hidden place behind the village. Nevertheless, the vessels
 used are still merely broken pieces of pottery.

The play shelters themselves are small enclosures
 made of leafy branches. Having used the huts for
 several days the children abandon them or set fire to
 them, and there are occasions when actual houses have
 [861] been set on fire during the absence of the grown-ups. If
 [858] this happens, nothing is done to the children, for chil-
 dren are everywhere considered to be 'foolish' and
 capable of any mischief.

[524] Sometimes millet is boiled in old small tins or broken
 pots. On the whole, the method of cooking is extremely
 crude, nevertheless, it is significant in that it shows the

CHILDHOOD

15

independent progress of the youngsters towards the activities of adult life. At times they are so proud of their successes that they even show their prepared food to their parents; and parents are generally pleased to taste what their children have prepared, even though the articles may not be well cooked. 857 868

Female children may also imitate activities involving the care of babies. They make a mould of a baby and a nurse-child, using leaves and some rags for bedding and clothes. The mould-child may be given to one of the younger children, who carries it and so learns how to look after babies. Sometimes maize cobs are used instead of the moulded clay. Children may also imitate the death of a child, and all the children in the group join in the mourning. [524]

Female children are very fond of singing the songs they hear older children sing at festivals. At this age they have a greater inclination to sing than male children, and their songs sometimes help them to quiet crying babies. [533]

As a pastime the nurses engage in 'Kora', a game played with small smooth bits of stone or rounded pieces of broken pottery. This game has a series of rules which every player must observe. Younger children imitate the older ones but are not very successful because their minds and muscles are as yet immature, and they lack the steadiness and precision required for the game. It is interesting to watch, and girls as old as even twelve years take an active part in it. The stones are collected in the palm, then thrown into the air while the back of the hand is turned to receive them, the object of the game being that more than one of the stones thrown into the air must come to rest on the back of the hand. Then by a series of trials one stone is thrown into the air while another on the ground is picked up in time to receive also the stone which has been thrown up. This is 857 524

857 repeated until all the fallen stones have been collected,
524 when it is considered that the game is won. The rules
are, however, more complicated than this brief sketch
has made them appear.

DISCIPLINE

857 During the period between two and six years, the
865 children have a tendency to play with their friends until
late in the evening. The playground may be quite re-
moved from the house; hence parents often have to take
strict action to keep their children within the bounds of
their homesteads. When they are disobedient, the
[864] normal disciplinary action is whipping. At this age
female children are instructed to sit with their knees
together. If one of them sits carelessly she is either warned
or whipped. Among her duties are the fetching of fire-
wood or dishes for food, and if she refuses to fetch fire-
wood for anyone in the village she may be whipped.
[868] She cannot, of course, be asked to bring fire from a
neighbouring home, or to light it, because she lacks the
experience necessary for this task. Crying without a
cause is sternly repressed and if it is persisted in it earns
the child a whipping.

855 *Training in decency.* Luo children from two years up-
863 wards are greatly neglected so far as clothes, washing,
and training in decency are concerned. Hence the
general appearance of these children is that of dirty
little creatures whose clothes are stained with the soil in
which they play. Some mothers admit that they fail to
wash their children for as long as three days. Other
mothers do not worry at all, assuming that their children
will go with the older children to wash themselves.

863 Children old enough to walk about are strictly in-
structed not to empty their bowels inside the home but
in front of the house beyond the enclosure. Once shown

CHILDHOOD

17

this place they make regular visits to it. Thus the place used by the children for this purpose appears very insanitary. Furthermore, children are in this way exposed to the danger of attack from worms of various kinds. 863

WEANING

There are very few cases where children are not weaned against their will. The maximum period of suckling is determined by the date of the following pregnancy. Thus if the mother is not again pregnant a child is suckled for as long as it wishes. It is considered that once a mother is expecting another child the milk in her breasts naturally belongs to the coming baby and would be poisonous to the older child. It is also believed that children who are suckled when their mothers are pregnant waste away and eventually die if the feeding is not stopped. 862

Methods of weaning. Methods of weaning do not vary much between different mothers. First, the child may be persuaded that the milk is 'pus', and as such should not be taken. Certain children are deliberately disgusted and are weaned immediately in this way.

The second method involves smearing with the bitter aloe sap, or a substance which irritates the mouth, like pepper. Much pain is inflicted on children weaned in this manner, and no doubt psychological studies of these children would bring to light the tremendous effects created by different methods of weaning. 824

Another method used is that of discouragement through fright. A mother may play on the sensory nerves of the child's face at night by touching it with grass, telling the nursing child that the grass is a caterpillar. As children are afraid of caterpillars this greatly upsets them, and the mother succeeds in severing the last physiological connection between herself and her 825

862 child. Having in the beginning created the child's liking for her breasts she must resort to crude methods to shift the child's interest to other sources. Hence weaning is not only a break in the time-honoured connection between mother and child, but also a significant psychological factor in the child's development. A closer analytical study of children would help to show how far the fears established during infancy influence their later emotional life.

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

855 The relationship between parents and children from
593 the age of two to six is principally determined by two factors: discipline and the provision of food. Parents feel that children of both sexes tend to prefer their mother partly because of her frequent contact with them, and even more because their food in its ready form is under her control.

In feeding children a mother's sympathies often prevent her from restricting their food, but the reverse situation may exist and sometimes we find a father who loves his child so much that he will give it all the food it desires. If the father is more severe than the mother in this respect the child naturally prefers the mother, and, similarly, a child will prefer a father who feeds it to a mother who restricts its food.

855 A further complication arises when the grandparents
593 come into the matter. So delicately balanced is this relationship
603 depending on food and discipline that the slightest difference is sufficient to draw the child towards those who favour it. This means that if the grandparents offer it better conditions, the child will stay with them most of the time. Hence, when I was once talking to a couple I know, I was informed that their daughter would not remain with them but preferred her grand-

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952

FL11 Luo FL11

CHILDHOOD

19

parents—a fact which had already struck me during my visits to the family. Although I have frequently visited them, I have seldom found the children there, and even more rarely at meal times. This situation would have become more pronounced when the children were weaned.

855

593

603

III

THE SCHOOL AGE

FROM SIX TO ELEVEN YEARS

857 THE school-going age for the Luo girl is characterised
868 by its transitional nature. It is chiefly a time of useful activity, for it is this age to which society has assigned the duty of nursing, and young girls begin and end their nursing service during this period. The mother now transforms the free day of play activity into real work and mobilizes the potential abilities of the young girl for her traditional education. The benefit reaped by the family is a secondary result, because the training given at this stage is part of a long process of education for married life. So far as the girl is concerned, the interest shown in nursing is more intense in the earlier phase of this age—at about eight to nine years.

With the increasing maturity of her mental life, the young girl begins to take an interest in the household duties of older girls, and thus associates nursing with girls of a younger age. We therefore find among the older girls of the age-group a section which despises nursing. The general domestic work of the age includes collecting firewood, fetching water in small containers, and keeping the fire burning while food cooks during the absence of the mother. Firewood is collected from round the village or sometimes further afield in company with older girls. In the groups the older girls may direct the younger ones where to find good firewood, but most of the collecting is done individually by the girl herself. The quantity carried increases as the child grows older, and the container in which water is carried also varies similarly. When her mother is away, the

THE SCHOOL AGE

21

young girl is responsible for seeing that the food already prepared is given to the male and younger female members of the family. Males are by tradition not allowed to dip their hands in the food pot, this being exclusively a woman's duty. 857
868
[264]
[462]

Apart from these strictly utilitarian activities, young girls slip off at intervals to play with their companions. It is during this period that male children part company with females and form their own separate play groups. Those who continue to play with girls to a later age are reproached. Although girls in the earlier phase of this age group do a considerable amount of domestic work, it is mainly of an introductory nature. Thus the mother cannot go away for a night and leave the young girl in charge. The errands given to her are simple and in accordance with her capabilities.

A later phase—ten to eleven. Again this is not an age of independence in domestic work. The young girl's duties are still limited by her inexperience. But now the mother concentrates on making the girl do more thoroughly the few duties she has learned. Two of the more important of these activities are fetching firewood and water. The mother begins to expect her daughter to make several journeys daily to the stream and at least one trip to fetch firewood without being told. If the girl forgets, she may be reproached or beaten. At this time a start is also made in the preparation of adult food. [861]

DISCIPLINE

The disciplinary training of girls of school-going age is theoretically a paternal as well as a maternal responsibility; but in practice the mother plays a much more important role than the father. It is against her mother that future blame for inefficiency in normal domestic duties will be directed. The young daughter is strictly 868
593

868 disciplined to prevent her from escaping the much
593 cherished traditional education. Discipline is weakened,
however, when the nurse is not the daughter of the
woman engaging her. In these circumstances the mis-
tress, fearing to lose the nurse's services, tolerates behav-
iour she would not countenance in her own daughter.

868 In the process of training, the young girl is expected
to be competent in household duties as early as possible.
Mothers have frequently told me that girls who begin
practising household duties later than the school-going
age, are generally very inefficient in domestic work;
thus in their early discipline mothers protect themselves
against future blame for poor training.

[594] Apart from the primary motive of training the young
girl as a prospective wife, the mother is influenced by
her desire to make her daughter of practical use to her-
self as soon as possible. The help from girls of school-
going age greatly relieves the constant pressure of a
woman's household tasks. This training also makes a
girl observe feeding manners more strictly.

861 In Luo families, a young girl is at the mercy of every-
593 one except her younger brothers and sisters. When dis-
obedient she is whipped with a stick. She thus becomes
equally tyrannical towards her juniors when they dis-
obey her. One girl told me that if her sister disobeyed
her she seized the child, knocked her down, and beat
her. This reflects the general attitude.

857 *Nursing.* Although some girls of this later age act as
nurses, nursing proper is more characteristic of the
earlier stage. When she nears the age of eleven, the
young girl rebels against nursing and runs back to her
home or, if nursing her own brothers and sisters, escapes
to relatives out of reach of her immediate family. This

[856] break takes place as soon as the breasts begin to develop
and is perhaps a revolutionary step caused by the grow-

THE SCHOOL AGE

23

857 ing interest in her body and in the opposite sex. It may
 856 be said that the loss of concern for her charge and concentration on herself is a sign announcing the emotional disturbances of adolescence. Young girls of this age now

854
 291



NUREE: AYOMA

857 consider nursing beneath their dignity, and their revolt
 856 is encouraged by increasing association with members of the opposite sex who would disdain talking to a child-nurse.

855 *Feeding.* The girls of this age group eat normal adult
 264 food, at the same time as adults, but the younger members of the group occasionally have a little food kept for them by their mothers. The consideration shown them as children depends on whether there are others younger

¹ [i.e. From six to eleven years old -
 Analyst.]

855 than themselves. As the girls grow older, feeding at odd
 264 times is restricted. The girls eat with the mother while
 their brothers eat with the father. The mother of the
 family takes particular care that the brothers get some
 food and even though she may go without herself, she
 sees that the children eat.

868 *Female education at school-going age.* The traditional edu-
 cation as given by the parents is strictly utilitarian. Its
 main aim is to prepare the girl for her future as a wife in
 a family and as a mother of children.

868 The girls accompany their mothers or older associates
 312 to fetch water, the younger ones being given a very little
 water in a small pot, usually used for milking. Larger
 pots are given to the girl as she grows older and stronger,
 the girls of six and seven being eager to imitate their
 older playmates. A few of the male children like to go to
 fetch water with similar containers, but their mothers
 do not encourage them. The mother of a young girl
 watches her carefully to see if she is interested in imita-
 ting these activities before giving any encouragement.

868 When the girl, at the age of eight or nine, expresses a
 [241] desire to dig, the mother takes her to a garden early in
 the morning to let her do so, and releases her at about
 [252] eight o'clock before the sun becomes too hot. At this
 time too, if a grinding stone is available, the mother
 teaches her child to grind corn, this being a continua-
 tion of the interest in grinding soil shown at play. The
 older girls of the group are instructed in giving gruel to
 the young children they nurse.

868 In the preparation of food, the girls first learn how to
 252 prepare gruel for the babies. But proper cooking comes
 861 very gradually and they learn it under the constant
 observation of the adult members of the family. The
 food cooked is first tasted by the parents only, when
 criticisms are openly made and encouragement of future

THE SCHOOL AGE

success given. In this atmosphere the girl slowly learns to master the art. It is not until she is thoroughly competent that she is allowed to prepare food for visitors.

Relationship with older children in the family. At first the young girl grows up in fear of and with a submissive attitude towards her older brothers and sisters, the attitude of fear decreasing towards her sisters as she begins more and more to share the same activities. Thus by the time the girls reach adolescence there is a growing feeling of companionship which brings them closer to each other in their everyday tasks, and any dominating attitude becomes consequently weaker. But among boys this attitude persists into adulthood, weakening only with the independence which adult life brings with it. Bullying is less noticeable among girls; boys of the school-going age become very tyrannical with their younger brothers and sisters, and their behaviour leads to frequent squabbles.

The attitude of a girl towards her older brothers and sisters is influenced by the treatment she receives from them. She can be sent on an errand by any older member of the family. Thus an elder child often passes orders on to her juniors since the errands in a large family are many and frequent. In this way the young girl learns to avoid and perhaps to dislike certain members of the family. As she grows older, she in turn exercises disciplinary action over those beneath her.

Parental attitude. The father plays a rather detached role, but in actual fact he retains a deep-seated interest in his growing daughter as a future promise of wealth. Though fundamentally mothers are equally interested in sons and daughters, they have at this time a more direct influence over their girls. A mother is interested in her daughter partly through her maternal responsibility and partly because of the girl's immediate value to the family, the father being more definitely concerned .

25
868
252
861593
855

[857]

26

THE LUO GIRL

593 with the male children. Maternal control over the
855 young girl is very great and remains about the same
when she reaches adolescence, though at this time the
father's control becomes increasingly essential in keep-
ing the growing personalities of the family in order.

857

312

291

482



YOUNG GIRLS GOING TO FETCH WATER

857

THE BEGINNING OF SPECIALISED ACTIVITIES

868 The school-going age marks the period when male
and female children part company. Young girls become
increasingly occupied with domestic work, such as fetch-
ing water and firewood, tending babies and watching the
fire, while male children of the same age continue to play
in groups for a much longer period. Apart from herding,
which is now less general than in the past, boys of school-

THE SCHOOL AGE

27

going age have little to do beyond playing in gangs. It is ⁸⁵⁷ thus very common to come across gangs of male children ⁸⁶⁸ engaged in social games. Because girls are occupied with their household duties it is much easier for boys of this age to go to school, causing less family disruption.

With her time for play diminishing, the young girl struggles between work given by her mother and the powerful attraction of the play groups from which her domestic duties tend to exclude her. Therefore if she is to discharge her traditional task of education, a mother must labour to keep her daughter from associating with these groups.

The girls' early training enables them to take on ^[866] family duties at which boys of the same age would fail, for in their training for responsibility the girls of this age ¹ are far in advance of their male counterpart. But the limited time in which the training must be completed has the effect of overloading a girl's school-going period.

The play groups. The activities carried on by girls from ⁸⁵⁷ six to eleven years old are a continuation of those of the previous age group from two to five, but the play becomes more mature and better organized. The older girl assumes the role of organizer of the play activities of her younger sisters. Thus the activities become more complex and besides those involving the imitation of grinding corn, other articles of food appear such as meat, fish, and leaves to represent vegetables.

During my observations I noticed a tendency ^[524] amongst young girls at play to give female names to their ^[552] dolls, which probably indicates that they identify the dolls with themselves. Thus, when I suggested male names for the dolls, they were rejected. In assuming the role of the doll's mother it again seems clear that the girl identifies herself with her own mother.

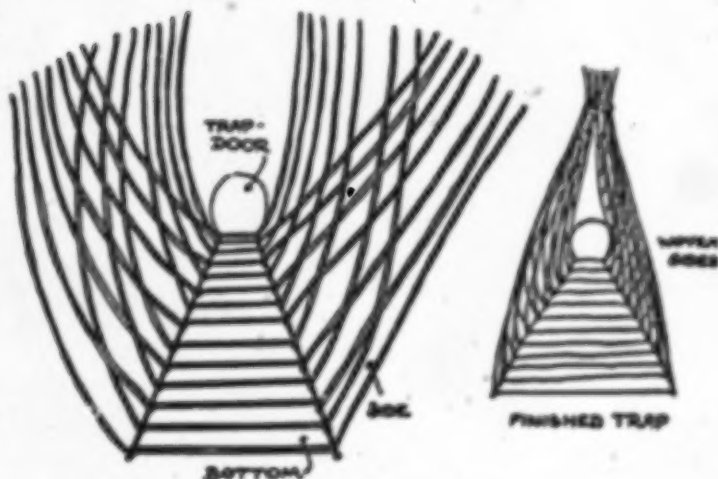
Girls may also be found playing the part of a mother

¹ Etc. From six to eleven years old. -
ANALYST]

28

THE LUO GIRL

A SELECTION OF PATTERNS WOVEN

285
[222]

(a) A Grasshopper trap

[301]



(b) A Wrist Band



(c) Pattern for the bottom of a basket

257 both at and after birth, the younger being instructed and guided by the older ones. Boys of about five are usually found in the play groups of the school-going age, but as they grow older they are drawn away to male play groups. The groups themselves vary in size from two members upwards, though occasionally a girl of this age may

THE SCHOOL AGE

29 000

be found playing alone. Weaving becomes more popular 857
between these ages, and before the advent of thread this 285
was done by means of grass stalks which were woven
into several patterns.

These patterns are still woven sometimes at home and
sometimes at play, but although they have not totally
disappeared they are no longer much in evidence. Male
children are sometimes taught to weave patterns by the
girls. At present odd threads gathered from old socks or
rags are used while stalks of grass serve as needles.

Age-group friendship. The age-group friendship which 857
characterizes so much of a girl's pre-marital life first 572
makes its appearance during the school-going age. But
at this time it is friendship in the simplest sense and is
more like a coming-together brought about by common
interests. The main feature of the relationship is visiting,
combined with moderate entertainment. After taking
food the young guests join in the play activities of the
friends they visit. The parents also take an interest and
put up with the financial burden involved. But the [613]
friendship established is essentially external in that it is
established between neighbouring girls of two lineages.*
Girls visit their friends in groups, and the relationship
grows weaker as the girls grow up. It appeared to me
that this friendship is strongest just before the advent of
their association with males on a sex basis.

As their interest in boys increases, the young girls'
natural desire for friendship is fulfilled. Friendships with
other girls are very much weakened by marriage and

**Lineage.* The term lineage refers to enlarged families with one
common ancestor or founder. These may live side by side with the
other related lineages. With the common ancestor and the branch-
ing family groups, the lineage structure appears as a 'Root System'.

As a result of fights between the various lineages in the past, [578]
some have been widely dispersed and may be found living among [66]
other groups not related to them. Frequent migrations have also
tended to complicate the structure.

857 sometimes break up at the slightest provocation or mis-
 572 understanding. The lineal character of the friendship is
 [613] facilitated by the social groupings of the people into
 lineages living side by side. This character is also as-
 sumed by the play groups which begin from the immedi-
 ate family circle and widen to include other members of
 the lineage to which the children belong. Although there
 also exists a considerable degree of friendship among
 male children it does not seem to be organized as closely
 as that among the girls. Though I saw frequent ex-
 amples of individual boyhood friendship I did not come
 across such a highly-developed arrangement.

THE CULTURAL PATTERN

857 Girls are born to a ready-made pattern of life and
 868 they are forced to follow this pattern from earliest child-
 hood. The school-age period is the one in which girls
 are especially trained to fit into the culture to which
 [177] they have been born. A woman's life therefore tends to
 show great conservatism even where civilizing influences
 have considerably penetrated. This conservatism is
 maintained through all the early training of the chil-
 dren and domestic activities are still carried on in
 almost the same traditional way.

In contrast, we find that male children between these
 ages have a greater degree of freedom. I noticed a larger
 variety of playthings among boys than among girls of
 the same school-going age. Day after day the girls re-
 peated imitations of the maternal activities. It was also
 much more difficult to discover where a group of boys
 had been playing than to find the favourite playgrounds
 of the female children. This was perhaps due to the
 difference in their freedom of movement. The occupa-
 tions of the girls keep them largely at home while the
 boys range over a much greater area.

THE SCHOOL AGE

31

The sexual life of girls at school-going age. While the sexual interest shown by girls of school-going age is not as pronounced as in the succeeding age group, there is a period of transition among the older members who sometimes begin to take great interest in romantic aspirations. The older girls when talking to their men friends often tolerate the presence of younger girls, and although they are not always accompanied by them their attitude towards younger girls is not hostile as in the case of older boys and their juniors. Hence it is common to find among adolescent girls a number of the school-going age. Girls nearing adolescence usually have a great desire to see the breasts come. These are therefore constantly touched and stimulated. 864
857

The horizon of sexual relationship — six to eleven. Although this age group marks the period of separation for the sexes so far as play goes, it is also a time when the older members of the groups of both sexes begin to take a specific interest in one another. The interest probably begins when the children in their imaginative play imitate the marital relationship which exists between adults. This starts with the imitation of a married couple, then proceeds to the imitation of the act of bearing a child. Both sexes take part in this.

But apart from these imitative games, a great curiosity is displayed in the examination of external reproductive organs. Among certain children we find that something approaching a crude sexual intercourse takes place when older members of the family are absent. During the period when the crops are ripening these older children, sometimes accompanied by younger ones who act as sentries, disappear into the cornfields to carry out this practice. 864

When this stage of development is made known by the younger children, who perhaps from sheer interest

864 report to the parents what they have seen, the reaction of the grown-ups is to reproach the children and restrict them from playing with members of the opposite sex. But it is only occasionally that such cases are reported. As a rule, children have such experiences when they are well out of reach. On the whole, the practice is not taken very seriously.

864 The child first experiences the restrictions of exogamy
867 when she is stopped from having sexual interest in any other child in her family. For instance, she is reproached when found playing with her cousins. Her growing interest in sex then extends itself to others outside the family. Through the orders of her adult relatives the child is forced to agree to have no sexual relationship with those related to her. These restrictions imposed on the younger generation follow the lineal structure, and it is the duty of the adult members of the community to tell the child the social code regarding sexual relationships. Up to the age of eleven the child accepts restrictions as a matter of course, her ideas of kinship being immature.

867 The child's knowledge of the boundaries of exogamy is uncertain till adolescence, when it takes its final form. Before that, its knowledge is arrived at by two processes: first, the child hears of some boys from a particular lineage and gets in touch with them; next the adult members of the community become aware of the existing relationship and set about to discourage it. The process is repeated elsewhere with the same result, a full knowledge of the boundaries of exogamy coming only with maturity. That it happens by this method of trial and error is clear from instances of marriage proposals being turned down between men and women who are related.

864 A great deal of knowledge about sex is acquired from

THE SCHOOL AGE

33

the older girls among whom the younger girls sleep. 864
Male visitors from the homes of women in adjoining homesteads also provide an opportunity for learning the coquetry and customs of the more mature girls. Although girls of school-going age are inexperienced, they are not despised on these occasions, though the necessity of keeping order in the room forces the older girls to keep an eye on the younger girls to discourage unnecessary laughter.

The family and the school. Modern school education acts as a break in the continuity of education for domestic purposes. The school demands regular attendance, whereas the mother requires the labour of her daughter. 177
For the young girl, the school provides a relief from 871
hard and tedious work for the family, and from her 857
mother's supervision. It also provides an unrestricted field of association with other girls, whereas at home she would rarely have time to see her girl friends. Thus the school gives a very different environment. There is a general tendency to become lazy among schoolgirls passing into adolescence.

The school forces parents to sacrifice themselves; hence there is no great keenness among mothers with regard to their daughters' education. The majority of them ignore it or are actively against it. In most quarters the desired knowledge for girls is limited to reading and writing. Beyond this, women have not been able to appreciate education for girls, and they often delay their daughters' entrance into schools. Thus in the lower Primary stages most of the girls are slightly older than the boys.

Education for girls is also distrusted because at present mothers feel that after it their daughters would not fit into the pattern of life into which they were born. There is also a feeling that the traditional education at home would suffer.

IV

ADOLESCENCE

857 In the interim period between childhood and adolescence there comes a time when a girl's ability to deal with domestic work is more advanced than her physical and mental development. It is during this period that the mother, still occupying a central position as adviser and supervisor of the girl's work, finds difficulty in the management of her daughter. Since the domestic work of her household is heavy, the mother uses all kinds of pressure to induce her daughter to do as much as she can.

856 The girl's life at this time is characterized by her increased interest in boys and desire to come into contact with them. The friendships established during childhood with other young girls are weakened by the development of a new object of friendship in the opposite sex. During this time the breasts of most girls develop noticeably. The girls show great interest in this development and employ various means to stimulate it. An instance of this interest can sometimes be seen among those who stuff clothes in their bosoms to exaggerate the size.

On the whole, the period differs only in the fact that the girls definitely aspire to be grown-ups and are also more interested in friendship with boys.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENCE

883 This new period is the time when the mother leaves her daughter to bring her knowledge of domestic work to perfection by her own efforts. As compared with the school-going age, there is little or no interference from

ADOLESCENCE

35

the mother. Thus the adolescent girl enjoys the freedom of being able to do most of her domestic work independently. Unless strict discipline is exercised she spends much of her time meeting her male friends. The thought of marriage begins to assume a reality and to become an influential factor in her attitude and movements. The self-love which made its first conspicuous appearance during the preceding age now takes the form of an effort to make herself look more attractive. Holes may be made in the ears from which to suspend ear-rings, and all sorts of armlets or bands are worn round the wrists. Clothes or head-dresses of bright colours are specially chosen. Although the practice is fast dying out, girls of this age used also to be addicted to tattooing their backs. Better clothing is among the most pressing needs of adolescent girls, and their families must either make sacrifices or else persuade the girl to make do with what is available.

The attitude of the parents. The attitude of parents towards an adolescent girl is greatly concerned with her economic value and her ability to do domestic work efficiently. An added consideration is the girl's conduct, both in and outside the family circle.

Hence, a girl's ability to work well in the house gives her mother a satisfaction which finds an outlet in conversation with other women. The mother strives to put forward the merits of her daughter as well as her social conduct in the community, while the young girl becomes almost mistress of the house, her mother hardly touching the work—especially when there is more than one adolescent daughter. The shock experienced when the girl is married is a matter which some of the envious neighbours do not refrain from mentioning.

On the other hand, a daughter who is inefficient in domestic work is no credit to her mother's reputation.

882 There is therefore frequent friction between some
593 mothers and daughters.

The father, while maintaining an interest of his own, does not exhibit his liking for his daughter so openly. The economic value of a girl to society is gauged by the extent to which a man may be excused his debts on the ground that after his daughter's marriage he will be able to pay them.

Allowances given to girls are not very generous despite the fact that daughters have a higher economic value than sons. There is a feeling that not much money should be lavished on someone who will not remain in the family to help the father in his old age. The main desire is to see the girl married, and it is a source of worry if she does not associate with men. The girl is also expected to be sociable towards neighbouring women, because if she is unpopular with them they might speak against her in the presence of her suitor or his relatives.

At this time disciplinary control by the parents slackens, since in order to contact men the girl requires a certain amount of freedom. Disciplinary measures may be exercised only in the event of misconduct, such as running away with a young man without notice to parents or having relations which are morally prejudicial to the community life. The mother, however, loses her dominating influence during the school age and the task of disciplining the older girl becomes the duty of the father or her older brothers.

THE SEXUAL LIFE AND ATTITUDE OF ADOLESCENTS

836

883

The sexual life of the adolescent is conditioned by the prevailing social conventions on the nature of sexual relationship between males and females. Thus, though it may appear on the surface that Luo society makes no allowance for unrestricted sexual contact, in fact a

ADOLESCENCE

37

difficult burden is imposed on the girls, who have to endure considerable inhibition to avoid social censure. On the other hand, boys enjoy much greater freedom. It would appear that this relatively stronger censure of a girl's conduct derives its strength from the anatomical evidence a woman is required to show on her day of marriage to prove her chastity. In this way it appears to be the duty of society to make sure that girls live up to the moral standards which ensure them a successful marriage. Therefore, whilst considerable intermingling is accorded to both sexes, relationships resulting in pregnancies and prostitution are discouraged. And, as has been seen, the social stigma attached to such relationships and their results comes down most heavily on the woman. 836 883 [585]

In view of the difficulties involved, the girl therefore adopts a compromise. She uses her wit as a defensive means of enabling her to enjoy the companionship of men and at the same time to help her to avoid being overcome by their reasoning. In this way, an adolescent girl who is clever at conversation is admired and considered entertaining by those men with whom she comes into contact. 836 521 883

When there are meetings between young girls and men there is accordingly a great deal of artful conversation. Girls consider men to be full of tricks designed to trap them. Mothers also warn their growing daughters to be careful of their conduct when with the opposite sex, explaining particularly that men are not to be played with to an extent where the matter becomes serious.

When girls go about together in a group they re-approach any of their number who give in to men easily. On these occasions group morality is far stronger than among those who are more individual in their attitudes. 883 573 836

883 On the whole, girls dislike those men whose chief object
 864 is sexual satisfaction. Their caution is often the result of
 881 talks on the nature of sexual relationship which girls
 hold in their communal sleeping places, and with older
 women.

When newly-married women return to their maternal homes, they freely discuss among themselves—especially during sleeping hours—their experiences with their husbands. This affords an opportunity for the unmarried adolescent girl to obtain first-hand information on the nature of relationships in married life.

883 *Opportunities for contact.* The normal first meeting between girls and those with whom they may have sexual relations, takes place by conscious or deliberate arrangements made by the parties concerned, at marriage ceremonies or in public places like market centres or towns. They first make each other's acquaintance somewhere between the girl's and the man's house, particularly when the two live in close proximity. These are distinguished from any other meetings in that they are arranged between the male friends and the older adolescent girls or those on the threshold of adolescence.

584 The meetings which take place during marriage ceremonies are observed with great interest by girls of the nursing age, who watch the older girls' behaviour towards their men friends with keen curiosity. In many instances introductions are managed through the brothers of the girls. Introductions resulting in marriage may also come about through a girl first acquainting herself with sisters who introduce their brother to her. Brothers of adolescent girls would, like all members of the family, disapprove of a prolonged friendship without any sign of betrothal and would do all they could to persuade the girl to look for another friend.

881 *Sex education of adolescent girls.* Girls in the old tradi-

883

178

ADOLESCENCE

39

tional society had a more deliberate or conscious sex education than they receive in modern times. Instruction on the nature of sexual relationship was formerly given by an old woman of the village, whose hut served as a communal sleeping place for the girls. This old woman was one who must have stopped giving birth to children. She was either a grandmother or an elder wife in a polygamous homestead. The communal sleeping places are still a feature of the girls' environment, but many of the modern huts have no experienced woman in them; hence the girls have lost their former source of instruction on both the marital and the following day-to-day relationships. [513]

The change from the traditional type of sex education has forced girls approaching marriage to seek information elsewhere. At present they usually make enquiries of experienced married women living in their neighbourhood. Beyond a few cautious warnings, mothers are rarely known to take part in the sex education of their daughters while fathers are completely detached from this field of enquiry. [593]

Sex activities in the communal sleeping places. Talks on sex are not the only activities engaged in by adolescent girls in their sleeping places. In some areas they also receive nocturnal visits from young men who have failed to find suitable opportunities to meet them during the day. This is not a widely spread practice, however, which may be due partly to the strict morality imposed by Christian moral conventions. [177]

Sometimes the girls themselves make arrangements to welcome these visitors by night, remaining awake in order to open the door for the men with whom they have made the appointment. Sometimes this form of visit is also carried out by young men without the girls' consent, but if they are discovered, a great outcry is

883 raised against such raiders. It is considered a disgrace to
836 be discovered as an accomplice in raids on the girls' sleeping quarters.

ON ATTAINING MATURITY

881 The attainment of maturity among girls is marked by
178 the first onset of menstruation. In the past this was kept very secret until several periods had been experienced, and even now its first occurrence is kept secret. Formerly, early preparations were made for it by instructing the girls about the physical changes involved.

[584] The information regarding this important physiological
[582] happening used to be given by the old woman in whose hut the girls slept. At present the information is obtained largely from experienced women with whom the girls associate. In the past there was no initiation ceremony to celebrate the event, and today the position remains the same. Although the betrothal of a girl could take place as early as ten, the social attitude was and still is that girls should not be handed over to their husbands before attaining maturity. Even when the mutual handing over took place before this age, the girl was obliged to live in the home of some older woman until the advent of menstruation. It is still believed that premature marriage results in great weakness to the girl.

882 *The social position of a girl on reaching maturity.* The
[732] social position of the newly-mature girl is vague and uncertain. Any abnormality of mind, character or body, is a source of anxiety to her family. Moreover, as most
[582] girls marry between sixteen and eighteen, there is a tendency for ill-wishers to over-state the ages of girls above that limit, because the attitude of society towards them is similar to that adopted towards overdue goods. Those who fail to marry at an early age thus become subjects of scorn. So strong is the pressure exerted by

ADOLESCENCE

41

this attitude that unmarried girls, as they grow older, are often forced to marry in the end by taking advantage of the institution of polygamy, which acts as a final method of absorption. Although she may live to an advanced age, a single girl is continually tormented by the fact that society does not approve of unmarried girls. 589 595

Restrictions. Traditionally, a mature girl is not allowed to enter her father's or her mother's sleeping place, especially if the mother is still giving birth to children. This restriction, although generally ignored by Christians, applies also to the wives of her uncles. Those who are her parents or parents by marriage do not go where a girl receives her male visitors. By custom this hut was built beyond view of the parents' huts and served as a sleeping place for boys. It is considered that a girl who has commenced associating with men should not enter her mother's or father's hut because she would interfere with their powers of reproduction. 594 513 882 [177] [602] [842]

Relationship with brothers. The fear of incest has led to the practice of keeping young women's activities as separate as possible from those of their brothers, but free association and conversation concerning their mutual interests generally takes place, since brothers and sisters retain an interest in each others' love affairs. From his sisters, a young man may be informed of things he wishes to know about his girl friend. 593 835

Pre-marital pregnancy. Cases of pre-marital pregnancy were very rare in the past, according to most of my informants. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationships were prohibited. Pregnancy among mature girls was apparently not infrequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious effort of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and was carefully guarded. It was a great honour and a 836 848 [585]

[554]

848 source of much social rejoicing to discover that a
 [836] married woman had been found to be a virgin. Such a
 [585] bride was given a high prestige among the other women.
 [554] In the past, if a woman gave birth to an illegitimate
 [595] child, her only chance of marriage was to an old man
 [583] with a number of wives. There was no possibility of
 occupying the position of chief wife of the family; and
 the heads of cattle paid were much fewer. The child was
 taken by the man who legally married her, but she was
 not allowed to give birth in her own home. Everything
 was done to get rid of her as soon as possible.

848 Examples of such pregnancies are very common at
 17.8 present. But although social disapproval is still keenly
 684 felt, modern conditions have become more favourable
 to women in this situation, and an increasing number
 of them are being married to bachelors. Unlike some
 communities, no death punishment was ever given. If
 the occurrence takes place between close relatives the
 matter is kept secret; in the past, however, the couple
 could be exiled.

MODERN EDUCATION AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

871 Progress in the education of adolescent girls is ham-
 883 pered because the Luo people do not appreciate its suit-
 562 ability to the environment of their women. To the
 178 majority, modern education is associated with clerical
 work and the many other jobs that men take up after a
 school career. The position of girls in this scheme is not
 clearly envisaged.

[582] The social importance attached to marriage is having
 to adapt itself to a prolonged school career and the
 raised age for marriage which this implies. An inability
 to appreciate schooling for girls is also based on a high
 esteem for the traditional education which it tends to
 interrupt and weaken.

V

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE
CUSTOMS

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

ONE difference between the older traditional kind of marriage and marriage as it is conducted nowadays lies in the part played by relatives to make the venture a success. Individual initiative was formerly negligible, the greater part of the marriage negotiations being undertaken by the relatives of both parties. This had the effect of reducing the importance of the bridegroom whose initiative gave way to a dependence upon the good will of his relations to whom the task of negotiation was left. 584
178

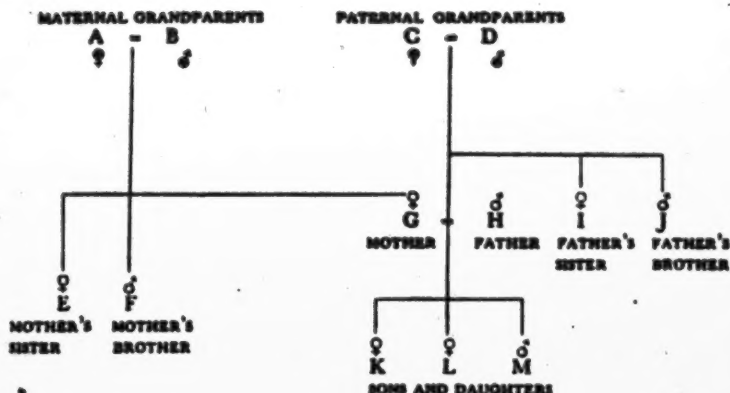
At present the tendency in marriage is towards individualism, although it is still a matter where society plays a considerable part. But since the individual man and woman are taking a greater part in deciding whom they shall marry, there is now a greater opportunity to develop an attachment genuinely based upon love. Steps are still usually taken, however, to ensure that the man's family has sufficient wealth to pay a satisfactory dowry, and the co-operation of the society in which the girl lives is needed if the relationship is to be successfully established. Great care is also taken to see that the marriage of the couple would not go against the normal stratification of relationships already in existence. 581

The marriage of a member of A-B family to C-D family* excludes the children of G and H from intermarrying with any member of the lineage of the maternal grandparents. So long as connection with the 582
613

* See diagram on p. 44.

44

THE LUO GIRL



maternal grandparents can be traced, descendants of G-H family will not marry the person concerned.

But E may be married to H's brother and I too may marry E's brother. Should F's son wish to marry from the community in which G has been married it would be G who would take the responsibility of looking for a young woman from among the daughters of her brothers-in-law and not from among her sisters-in-law. In the same way, the sons of G's brothers-in-law cannot marry any of G's sisters or sisters by relation (daughters of her uncles). The method of acting through a relative in establishing a marriage connection is still in use, although personal initiative is increasingly taking its place.

THE POSITION OF A BETROTHED WOMAN

The life of a betrothed woman presents a busy time of conflicting and disturbing news. Information of much discomfort to both parties comes and goes and is forgotten. To the girl such information is of great importance, and her attitude is often affected by it. Each time a

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS 45

group of girls or young women meet, there is comment on what has been said about so-and-so in certain quarters. Mixed with this unwelcome gossip may come other features of great encouragement. Thus there is much emotional strain in the years preceding marriage. It is a time when both parties to the engagement are uncertain about what may develop next.

Amidst all this, the woman still has the freedom of talking to any young men she meets, and the emotional uncertainty, which is much stronger with a girl, compels her at times not to put all her hopes in one man. Although her relationship with former friends becomes relatively weak, she does not lose interest in them until she eventually gets married. A great deal of persuasion is employed. Each time she meets her friends her sympathies are tested. In this difficult period the male and female relatives of the man should play a beneficial part. Some carefully arranged marriages are broken owing to lack of such support.

In general, a betrothed woman is an object of competition. Once engaged, the forces that work against her engagement are let loose. Reports true and false are continually passed on. In the girl's family, the mother continues to instruct her on how to address the relatives whom she will meet in her new home. If the marriage is to be cancelled, the dowry paid by the first candidate must be paid back before the cattle of the other are accepted. Should the girl run away with someone else, she will, on her return, be beaten, and it is only after a long interval that the offence will be forgotten.

Pre-nuptial and modern education. There is no special attempt to educate mature girls just before marriage. The nature of the training they receive is merely a continuation of that given to them in their adolescence. Thus they obtain information about their future status

584
[521]
[152][152]
[572]

[583]

584
881

584 on their own initiative, the object being to familiarise
881 them with the relationship between husband and wife
and with the prospective husband's moods and to establish a good understanding. At this time there is no instruction on the care of babies, such knowledge being acquired after the woman has given birth.

871 The difference between the traditional training of
178 brides and their modern education, even in its elementary stages, is tremendous. While traditional education
[881] is constantly weakening, modern education tends to develop along its own independent lines, omitting rather than assisting those elements it is intended to improve. It is likely that a stronger foundation could be built through modern education if the latter paid more heed to those features of community life which most urgently require improvement, but which in themselves provide a groundwork of practical knowledge.

The pace of progress in Luo society is bound to be slow while the sphere of women's life remains still radically conservative. It is arguable that modern education emphasizes literary theory too much, yet the traditional education which stresses practical work from early childhood, gives only a limited time for theory, even in maturity. However this may be, there is no doubt that
[881] there now exists too much ignorance of the requisite knowledge about sex, for girls and young women can be met who plainly profess ignorance on certain fundamental features of the traditional training.

It therefore seems necessary that if education is to be of real use and interest to girls, some features of practical value to society should be included. This presupposes a thorough study of the subject concerned and a wise selection of those elements which would inspire the pupils to improve themselves and the society in which they move.

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS 47

ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE

Dowry. The payment of a dowry takes place when the suitor of a young woman has formally presented himself to her parents and obtained their consent. Having agreed to marry him, the woman arranges the interview with the parents. The news of his coming is generally communicated to the father through the mother. In certain matters relating to her sexual life, the girl might confide in her mother, with whom she naturally feels very much at home. 584
[583]
[593]

The traditional marriage. The traditional marriage, which has undergone considerable modification in many respects, is characterized by a number of ceremonies. The ceremonies which follow take place after the 'meko' or 'catching', a term applied to the act of seizing a girl and dragging her to her husband's home. This 'catching' is arranged by the husband and his relatives. Normally the girl is aware of it long before it takes place. The time when it will occur can be estimated by considering the number of cattle paid in—between seven and eight according to my own experience. After this time arrives the girl must restrict her movements lest she tempt her suitor to 'catch' her. 585
589

Having decided to 'catch' her, he tries by several methods to get her out of the reach of her brothers, who would normally put up a strong fight before allowing their sister to go. If the bridegroom's friends fail to lure her away from her home, they attempt to 'catch' her in it. But this can be done only where there is no strong force of young men to match the raiders. In such an event, arrangements would be secretly made with the woman in whose hut the girl sleeps; and a small payment having been made to her, the bride is seized in the dark.

Sometimes the father gives permission for his daughter

583 to be seized; but even when the father has agreed to let his daughter go, the younger relations put up a fight, not in order to detain the girl, but to test the courage of the people taking her. This is also done to test the value attached to her as a future wife in her husband's community.

585 Among the majority of young women an unwilling-
152 ness to leave home is exhibited on the last day. This unwillingness, accompanied by violent outbursts of emotion, is partly caused by the break with her family and familiar environment that marriage involves. Sometimes the emotional outbursts reach undue proportion, rendering the young woman a thorough misfit in her new home. Screaming is common even among those who are secretly pleased with the situation.

To a person unused to this sight it would appear to be an act of violence and injustice. But though some of the women may be sincerely upset, a large number of them look back on the incident with great satisfaction and confess that they screamed because it was customary to do so. This is made even clearer by their reactions when they are later present at similar incidents. Amidst great laughter they say comforting words to the girl being dragged, assuring her that she will meet with excellent treatment.

585 *The traditional ceremonies.* The news that a particular girl has been caught is followed by the organization of a group of young girls to follow after the bride. It is this group which brings back news to the parents as to whether the girl was a virgin. They remain at the bride's new home for one night and during this time young men were by tradition allowed to spend the night in the same hut with these girls.

[836]

The next ceremony takes place when the bride's parents slaughter an ox and send special parts of the

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE CUSTOMS 49

meat to be shared among the different families within the larger lineage to which the husband belongs. This is followed by a big feast at the girl's home where people spend a whole night outside, drinking, eating, and singing. When the girl returns to his home it is time for the husband to continue paying dowry as demanded by her parents. 585

The final ceremony marking the completion of the dowry and indicating the husband's satisfaction with his wife is called 'riso'. At this the husband slaughters an animal and gives a great feast to his relatives. [583]

Variants of traditional marriage customs. With the introduction of modern ideas and the widening of the people's physical environment, a large number of special marriages now occur which omit various features of the traditional ceremony. This is especially true of marriages where there is a strong basis of love. In such instances a young woman may go to her suitor without ceremony after making some private arrangement. 585
177

Christian influence has greatly modified marriage. Like the traditional marriage the Christian version is characterized by many ceremonies, some new and some old. Thus in the traditional marriage the husband is required at each stage to make several payments in live animals to cover certain procedures, and in Christian marriage he can cover all of them at once by paying a live animal or some money.

The violence which characterized former marriages is absent from the Christian ceremony. In reality, what happens inside the church is purely western, but what occurs outside is a blend of modified traditional practices and certain features of western life. Christian marriage is distinguished from traditional marriage by the large expense involved. Thus, contrary to what might be expected, it is among the Christians that people exist who [583]

50

THE LUO GIRL

585 demand very high dowries for their daughters. Like the
177 traditional marriage it¹ is also accompanied by con-
[583] siderable emotional strain, felt more by the mother and
[152] female children than by the male members of the family.

¹ [i.e. Christian marriage. - Analyst]

VI

MARRIED LIFE

With the exception of those women who move with their husbands to the towns, the majority of rural married women go through a period of living under the close supervision of their mothers-in-law. The duration of this time depends on the mutual feeling between wife and mother-in-law.

585

606

591

177

The married woman must learn everything possible about her new family. The mother-in-law tells her about the various sources of food and assists her to fit into her new life in the manner desired. Very often this involves unlearning certain things she has learnt at home. Among other things, she must learn the meal hours and individual tastes of those in the new family, and this brief probationary period gives character to her future relationship with them. At this time a mean woman is soon known by her behaviour; moreover, in the earlier stages of her married life a young wife is constantly accompanied by a companion who reports her general attitude to the family.

Other women in the home may also send her on errands wherever they wish, the idea being to test her character in the communal life of women. Hence unpopularity would have a profound effect upon her, and through her, upon her husband. But although she is under the authority of her mother-in-law or someone occupying the same position, her mother-in-law's actions are also open to censure by the other women. The problem of fitting a wife into this new life is thus a family affair.

Great importance is still attached to the traditional

177

[text continues on p. 53]

366
291
415
516

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



THE WOMEN'S SECTION OF A MARKET

Peter Hill

[p. 52]

MARRIED LIFE

53

schooling of wives, but modern young women sometimes rebel against this ordered régime, choosing rather to do as they please in their new homes.

585
606
177

Since the introduction of the plough, the part played by men in the cultivation of the fields has greatly increased. Clearing and ploughing are now done by men, but planting and harvesting are still carried on largely by women.

462
241
177

Women's organizations. In the past, women's activities were limited in number. Apart from the communal dancing parties in which they took a great pride, there existed among certain related families councils to settle disputes and misconduct among women. This communal organization has tended to become weaker with the growing family individuality introduced by modern conditions.

885
535
627

While Christian influence has increased their freedom by releasing women from tribal prejudice and by widening the horizon of men's views, pagan women are still hampered from taking an active part in modern economic and social activities.

177
562

Women's organizations range from small religious groups to registered co-operative societies. The management of the co-operative societies is largely in the hands of Christian women. They are thus more progressive than their pagan neighbours, although the gap is rapidly narrowing owing to the influence exercised by Christian women upon the other women in the community.

575
474
177

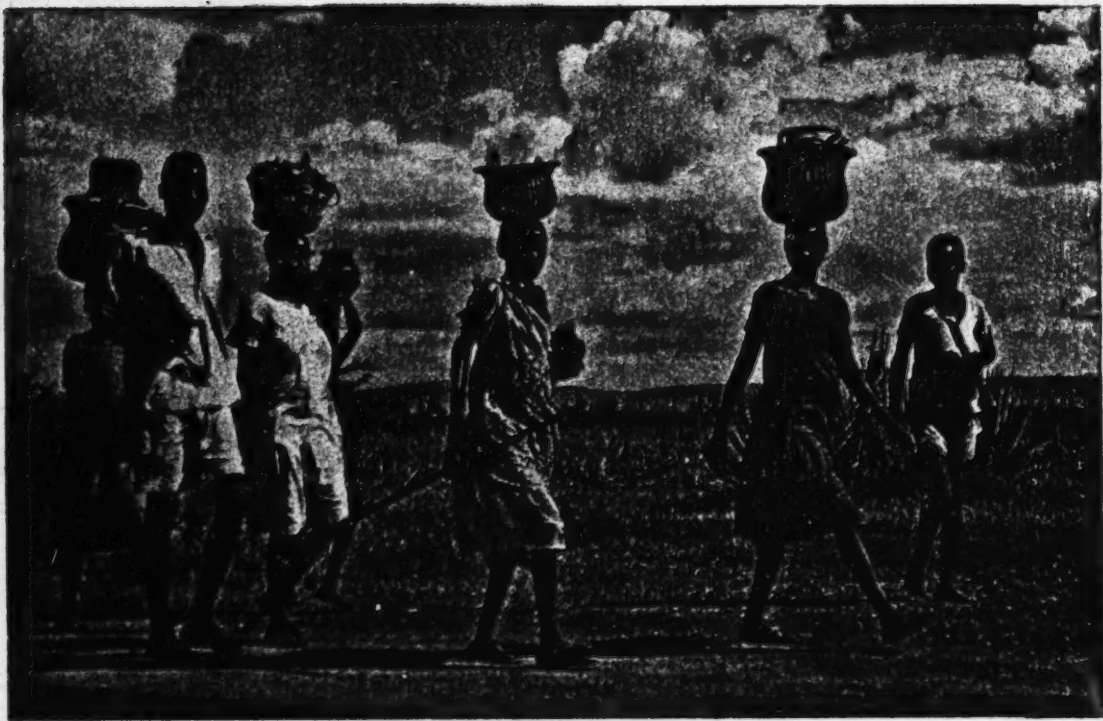
The changing economy. Before the introduction of a money economy, the garden formed the basis of the economic life of women. Their transactions depended on garden produce which they bartered in exchange for live animals. The more industrious and economical thus acquired considerable wealth, supplementing garden

462
594
433
177

[Text continues on p.55]

488
415
291
133

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11



THE END OF A MARKET DAY

Peter Hill

[p.54]

MARRIED LIFE

55

economy by handicrafts and exchanging pots and baskets for corn.

The introduction of modern household goods of a more durable nature has lessened women's chances of earning money through weaving baskets or making pots. The overcrowding of land has also meant an increased economic dependence on men. To satisfy family demands, most women engage in some kind of business transaction which often keeps them out of the home from morning till late in the evening. Although motor transport has improved these conditions, children have been unfavourably affected through neglect during the mother's prolonged absence. This change from sedentary occupation to long-distance travel has taken place since the coming of new economic standards, and at the moment it is very rare to find a woman who does not trade in a small way.

462
594
433
177

WOMEN AND THE BIRTH OF CHILDREN

Customs and taboos. The customs and taboos observed by expectant mothers merely reflect the social attitude of Luo women to the birth of their children. Thus the aims of the customs and taboos can only be appreciated in the light of a social desire for the woman to give birth without difficulty. Fundamentally this is also a basis for the disapproval of the birth of twins, and also of abnormal deliveries.

Concerning the persistence of the marital relationship during pregnancy there is no generally accepted restriction. But while custom varies from person to person, any sexual relationship continuing after the sixth month of pregnancy is regarded as excessive. The only social stigma attached to sexual relationship continued for the greater part of this period, is that it may provoke an open rebuke from the midwives or other women. Thus while no hard

843

[845]

843

834

[Text continues on p. 57]

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952

FL11 Luo FL11

482
291
301
415
516



AN ELDERLY WOMAN WITH SOME OF HER FOOD

E.N.

[p. 56]

MARRIED LIFE

57

and fast rule can be placed on the time of the temporary termination of the marital relationship, it is generally left to the good sense of the men and women concerned. 843
[834]

The regulation of the diet. Here again the restrictions aim mainly at minimizing the chances of the child being too big, thus rendering it easier for the mother to give birth. Among the foods which women normally eat, bananas are eliminated during pregnancy because of their supposed fattening effect upon the child, and the danger of thus causing a difficult delivery. Among the most conservative women, pumpkins are placed in the same category with the additional belief that, since their contents are mostly water, they have a weakening effect upon the child. 843
262
[845]

Sugary foodstuffs such as canes, sweets, sugary tea or coffee are among the things which expectant mothers do not eat. Women believe that these foods produce babies so fat that they put a strain on the mother's strength. For the same reason, the excessive drinking of gruel is prohibited, and hot gruel is especially avoided on the grounds that it would scald the baby. But while these restrictions are adhered to in principle, in actual practice women with a strong liking for forbidden foodstuffs do not refrain from eating them. [83]

A factor of great psychological significance is the belief that Luo mothers begin to yield to the will of their babies long before they are born. Among them are some who, during pregnancy, develop a habit of eating dried mud and other peculiar foodstuffs, one baby causing a mother to eat these and the next turning her appetite against them. These strange habits of eating are attributed to the will of the expected child; and it is believed that the domination of the child over the mother, enduring through the early part of its life, begins in the period of pregnancy.

843 Dietary restriction may also be a matter of family
262 habit or taboo. Thus a mother may inform her children
[753] while they are young that a certain kind of food is not to
be eaten by members of their family. This restriction
may result from a fear of spreading certain diseases,
generally skin ailments, latent in that particular family
group. The restriction does not apply to others who are
free from the supposed disease. When a woman gives
birth to a baby her habits in these respects do not
change.

[756] A dietary restriction may also result from the instruc-
tion of a medicine man, as in the case of a woman who
has had no child for a long time. During his treatment
[784] the medicine man gives instruction on taboos and com-
pulsory dietary restrictions. Dislike of a certain food
during pregnancy may also result from personal dis-
agreeable experience. This is also generally assigned to
the will of the child. Restraints of a family origin, as well
as those imposed by the medicine man and acquired
from personal experience, are more strictly adhered to
than the traditional restrictions.

843 *Medicinal restrictions.* The list of medicines that expect-
278 tant mothers may not take is a small one. Apart from
177 the traditional strong purgatives and medicines for kill-
ing worms, modern drugs like quinine and strong Euro-
pean laxatives are eliminated, such measures being
designed to prevent abortion or premature birth.

843 *Social relationship.* Superstitions affecting expectant
177 mothers have very largely yielded to the influence of
Christianity, but we find remnants of old regulations,
516 such as those connected with sitting, still observed by
women. An expectant mother is required to sit with a
straight back. Neither should she put one of her legs on
top of another, because it is believed that the expected
child in assuming a similar position would be difficult to

MARRIED LIFE

• 59

deliver. A person standing behind an expectant mother may also be driven away in the fear that if that person's birth had been difficult the birth of the coming child would be equally difficult. Social regulations connected with greetings are found among the pagans and these may result from the instruction of a medicine man. Thus he may prescribe the length of time in which an expectant mother is not allowed to greet those whom she happens to meet on the road. [843] [845] [576]

Although in the family circle a woman is not allowed to overwork during this period, conditions are such that, if left to themselves, they continue with very strenuous work until the time of birth. In the past, expectant mothers stored food which they ate after giving birth. These foodstuffs might be dried meat, dried fish, ghee, and corn for gruel. Nowadays the availability of fresh meat has made it possible to supply women with sufficient food even although it is very expensive. [251]

The amount of rest given to an expectant mother depends on the husband's position in society. With the poorer families, hard work continues till the time of birth. Thus, at one time a woman called Andege took some ripe bananas to Kisumu in the morning, returned at about 2 p.m., and at 4 p.m. gave birth to her daughter, Rapuoda. [844]

Guessing the child's sex. In guessing at the child's sex before birth, the mothers generally rely on past experience. It is recognized to be very difficult, and even impossible, to predict the sex of the first child. Certain guesses depend on the health of the mother, though such guesses are not made public. For a male child it is believed that the mother should be thin; with a female child, the reverse, and these views are probably based on the assumption that male children sap their mother's energy to a greater degree. This is likewise the basis of [846]

843 the custom which confines a female child in the hut with
[846] its mother for only three days, whereas a male child
would stay with its mother for four days, thus giving her
a longer rest. In reality, only those women who have
given birth to two or more children seem to be able to
make any successful guess as to the sex of their expected
child.

THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

844 *Preparations.* Among the Christian women, customs
177 connected with the preparation for a birth have largely
been dropped; but superstition is still a very real factor
in the life of every Luo woman. Hence, for example, the
preparation of bedding and clothes before a birth is
usually neglected on purpose, the position being even
worse in families of low income. When women give
birth in the maternity wards, the husbands therefore
have to make a hasty preparation during the seven days
spent by their wives in hospital.

843 Among the pagans, the pain or nausea experienced
177 during the first few months of foetal growth is mitigated
[302] by the administration of a certain medicine. When this
trouble has ceased the woman is expected to grow long
hair which should not be shaved until the child is born.
Those pagan women who associate much with Christians,
however, have abolished this custom of growing hair,
though some of them still take the medicine. Among the
pagans, the expectant mother takes a light purgative
during the sixth month which is believed to free her from
any abdominal impurity. Strong purgatives are forbidden
in case they may cause abortion or premature birth.

844 *Assistance during delivery.* The assistance a woman
receives when giving birth depends on the circumstances
in which she finds herself. There is no ruling laid down

MARRIED LIFE

61

as to which particular people should help her; this obligation merely rests on whomsoever happens to be present. The assistance of a midwife is required more for a first child than for those following. Anyone in the family may help the woman in an emergency; but the presence of the husband is not considered necessary unless the case is a difficult one. In a difficult labour several strong men may be required to hold the woman, but many women give birth to their babies without any assistance. The usual positions adopted are: lying on the back with knees bent, or sitting with the back supported by a tree. Some leaves serve for the mat. Older women often have their child without assistance, but it is an obligation upon everyone who finds a woman in need of help to assist her, even if she is unknown to them. 844

On some occasions a woman about to give birth is made to run, eventually being seated to deliver her baby. A light pressure is exerted on the shoulders. The instructions are given by midwives, who sometimes slap the woman across her face if she does not obey their orders.

After a child is born, cold water is poured over it to make it cry. If it does not cry, iron hoes are brought and a series of loud tinkling noises made as a form of persuasion. Among the pagans, tobacco smoke is sometimes puffed into the child's nose. When it has been made to utter its first cry, its head is shaped to the normal form, and while the nurse waits for the placenta, she cleans the baby's forehead with a soft leaf. Before the cord is cut it is tied with strips of dried banana leaves at three equal intervals for a girl and at four equal intervals for a boy, to indicate the length of the period of rest. The midwives used to chant a prayer, but this is now no longer heard. It is possible that this chant was a thanksgiving and a request for the newborn baby to fare well in life. 782

844 in life. The women themselves seem to share a belief that neither their own efforts nor the assistance of others have much effect upon the actual delivery of children. They prefer to believe that it is some mysterious power of God which helps them to give birth to their children.

845 *Difficult labour.* Although difficult labour cases are now largely dealt with in hospitals, the crude traditional methods are occasionally used in remote areas, and they indicate the extent to which people will go to save the lives of mothers. To the midwives a difficult labour was formerly a dreaded situation. The mothers could suffer for days, and many of them died before relief was given. If a woman died before the birth it was considered a very bad omen. A stranger had to be paid to cut her open and remove the dead child, but no relative of her own was allowed to touch her.

When there was any hope of saving the mother's life, a large number of people gathered about her, and many deaths may have occurred through over-manipulation. Sometimes as many as ten persons were engaged in operating, while others stood by giving confused advice. The group performing the operation included men as well as women. The men held the woman while the women pulled on the head of the child, which was hooked on an iron hoe.

When this was done, little attention was paid to the damage of the passage from the womb. If the woman suffered twice from such a difficult delivery, she and her husband were advised to cease having children. If the advice was not observed the midwives had a right to refuse their help.

[177] *Twins.* The birth of twins was an unwelcome experience in pre-Christianized society, but in these days it is rarely accompanied by its traditional ceremonies of lamentation. According to tradition, as soon as the loud

MARRIED LIFE

63

cry of the midwives was heard announcing the birth of twins, the news had to be carried to the parents of the woman. This loud cry was intended to scare the evil spirits which had brought about the double birth. With it began a series of taboos on the couple as well as on the twins, the family being virtually isolated from society. For emptying their bowels a large pot was placed in a hidden corner at the back of the house. If either of the twins died during the early period it was thrown into this pot. In place of the usual clothing, the couple had creepers twined around them. The period of taboo closed with a large gathering at which a great deal of beer was drunk. At this final ceremony the dancing was rather obscene and was accompanied by foul language in reference to the couple. These proceedings lifted the taboo from the shoulders of the parents, but the twins continued to be affected until their deaths. Moreover, anything done to one of the twins had to be done to the other also, because they could not be treated as separate identities. Now the attitude has greatly changed and even among pagans these customs are no longer observed. [177] 845

Similarly, a birth in which the baby's legs appeared first was dreaded. This was ascribed to the work of the evil spirit.

Renewal of marital relationship. Originally it was the custom for the renewal of a marital relationship to take place on the third day following the birth of a female child, and on the fourth day after a male child. No married relatives were allowed to enter the hut to see the baby before the parents of the child renewed their marital relationship. 846 834

Although none of my informants could testify that this practice still exists, it is possible that it persists in certain places. Some of the informants pointed out that [177]

64

THE LUO GIRL

846 modern maternity wards have weakened the custom, since
834 women stay in them for seven days and return home
177 after having shown the baby to many of their friends.

751 *Protection against witches.* Although Christian mothers
854 are not affected by this kind of superstition, pagan
mothers still tie things around the necks of their babies
to protect them from malignant glances, these articles
being attached when the children are exposed to the
view of relatives and friends. Most people believe that
754 babies can be bewitched as soon as their skin begins to
854 darken, and the pagans believe that through magic an
753 ill-disposed person can introduce a worm into the baby's
stomach. If this occurs, the baby cries and vomits when-
ever it is suckled by its mother. In the past when no
clothes were worn, it was believed that the mother's
breast could also be bewitched. The tradition was that
every living person had a beneficial worm in the
stomach, and that this worm digested the food eaten.
When the worm refused to digest the food, there would
be serious stomach trouble which might prove fatal.
When a child was bewitched it was believed that its
beneficial worm had been replaced by a harmful one.

757 Protection against this harmful worm could sup-
posedly be gained by scratching the body of the child
(the forehead, the palm, or the flat of the foot) with
some medicine, and it is still said that, if the medicine is
sufficiently strong, any evil-eyed man looking at the
child with the intention of bewitching it will lose his eye-
sight. Some fragments of bones or roots of herbs may
also be worn for the same purpose. Many of these cus-
[177] toms have disappeared in strongly Christianized areas,
the Christians themselves having sometimes taken direct
action to stamp them out, but nurses are still warned
not to let young children play on the roadside, in order
to protect their charges from being bewitched.

MARRIED LIFE

65

Childless marriages. Failure to have a child is a great disaster in the home. The idea of the perpetuation of their kind is so deeply rooted in the minds of the Luo people that a childless marriage generally culminates in the breaking up of the home concerned, the husband usually being advised by his relatives to marry a second wife. Although results may prove that it is the husband who is defective, priority is always given to men to prove their fecundity. Thus a woman is forbidden by the social conventions to attempt to prove on her own initiative that she can give birth to children. 842 [586]

If through the second marriage the husband is proved to be sterile, his wives may one by one desert him. On the other hand, this great desire for children may lead him to carry on his name through the secret offices of the woman's brothers-in-law. Otherwise he must face the inevitable fate of having his family broken up. [586]

Women's diet after birth. For the first week after childbirth, the mother's food is limited to gruel, fish, and green vegetables. 'Bo', which is one of the vegetable pulses, is excluded on account of the trouble it gives to the stomach. During this early period meat is not eaten because most women complain that it makes the stomach tight. Hard food, such as boiled maize, is also avoided at this time. Although tea and coffee are occasionally drunk by the more fortunate families, the drink which pleases women most at this time is gruel. They are allowed to take a lot of it as people believe that it helps in the formation of the milk which is so important for feeding the new baby. 846 262 [272] [853]

The period of this considered treatment is brief, lasting for about a month at the most. Much depends on the economic resources of the family concerned, and the poorer the family is, the shorter is the time that careful attention can be given.

512 *Daily rhythm of family duties.* The daily programme of a
 462 mother with a young child is divided into two major
 264 phases, corresponding with the morning and the even-
 [853] ing meals. In the morning the activities include the
 [956] preparation of gruel for the child, preceded by suckling
 it and sweeping the house. When prepared, the gruel is
 left with a nurse, to be given to the child when it cries.
 The mother then goes to the field or to any major work
 of the day. Preparation of the morning meal begins at
 about 9 a.m., and by 10 a.m. the family disperses again,
 the men perhaps to herd cattle or to go to market, and
 the women to fetch firewood or bring water from the
 river.

[178] The idea of having a meal freshly prepared in the
 morning is of recent origin. In the past, people ate cold
 food preserved from the previous evening meal. A great
 proportion of what is eaten during the week comes from
 the gardens.

[178] In former days, women were expected to prepare an
 afternoon gruel for their husbands at about 3 p.m. This
 is still the custom in some families, but modern women
 are quite ignorant of the practice in its traditional form.

858 *The social attitude towards male and female children.* The
 613 difference in the social attitude towards male and
 female children arises from considering them in relation
 to the future of the lineage to which they belong. A
 male child is looked upon as a dynamic element in the
 lineal structure. On the other hand, a female child,
 though a potential source of wealth, is regarded as an
 exporter of fertility from her parents' lineage to the
 lineage of her husband. Thus, if she becomes the mother
 of many children, her larger numbers are looked upon
 [142] with disfavour as taking something away from her original
 [593] family. This results in a superstitious feeling which
 affects her visits to the parental home.

MARRIED LIFE

67

Although a larger number of males would normally be preferred, a family of exclusively male children is regarded as a disadvantage because of the economic burden incurred when the sons want to marry. But when a father has only female children, his position is considered as 'dead', for a family is only considered as living when there are male members to perpetuate the line.

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Lineage. Social relationship among the Luo is determined by the strict manner in which their society is organized. Since the social structure follows a system of lineage (*dhoufi*, pl., *dheet*, sing.), the exogamous limits or the limits within which intermarriage may not take place, depend on the relationship between these lineages. When relationships are close, the lineages unite through their dead originators until a common ancestor is reached. The lineages continue to grow, thus stretching the distance of relationship further and further. The breaking of the rule against intermarriage depends on the attitude of the living members of the lineages and the distance between them and their ancestors.

In addition to the regulation of matrimonial relationships, the structure of the society also determines ritual observances and funeral ceremonies among the Luo, while the relationship between the different lineages is characterized by competition, which is often a feature of polygamous homes.

Family relationships. The difference between monogamous and polygamous homes is found not only in the status of the women, but also in the psychological attitude towards the parents resulting from the husband and wife relationship. Although it is generally assumed that the focus of family life is the father, the degree of

595 initiative and freedom among women is greater in poly-
594 gamous families than in monogamous ones. In the latter
there is a greater dependence on the father, whereas the
father of a polygamous household is relatively free from
the many responsibilities imposed upon the heads of
monogamous families.

The wife of a monogamist usually has a greater share
of her husband's wealth than the wife of a polygamist.
In families where there are many wives, the relationship
between a husband and any one of his wives depends on
the personal attention that he receives. Often the provi-
sion of food is a very important factor, because there is a
natural tendency to discriminate against those wives
who do not give enough of their food to the husband.
The polygamous father demands obedience from both
his children and his wives but in the main he leaves the
women to support themselves.

In this way a sort of individuality develops among the
different houses of the one family. In the upbringing of
her children each mother aims at instilling a competi-
tive spirit between her children and those of the other
houses. Hence contact between the father and his chil-
dren is rather lessened, while his detached position in-
creases the children's fear of him. The father's personal
assistance goes largely to the youngest wife, from whom
he gets most of his personal attention, but he normally
continues to respect the position of his chief wife.

In the monogamous family the economic fluctuation
in the fortune of the father has results which are felt
throughout the family, and here, too, there are instances
where the family is supported by the mother. In both
types of family, however, the disciplinary action of the
father is more authoritative than that of the mother,
though the children may naturally prefer the parent
who is more lenient and sympathetic.

MARRIED LIFE

69

The strongest tie of relationship exists between the children of one mother. This close relationship extends to the maternal as well as the paternal grandparents. Children may be taken to the maternal relatives while they are still young, or they may sometimes go for visits when they are a little older. Although they share the same father, the relationship of the children with those of the other houses is much less close, because the mother in each house thinks first of the future of her own children. For this reason the undue wealth of any one particular house is viewed with alarm in the other houses and a mother will maintain a constant watch on the other sections of the family lest their successes should overshadow her own children.

When a child goes to stay with its maternal grandparents it is often spoilt by their too readily shown affection and their unwillingness to teach it discipline. Hence parents complain that children who spend most of their time with their maternal relatives are unruly and difficult to manage when they return to their homes.

595

603

603

855

CONCLUSION

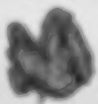
121 In order that educational plans may be effective, attention should be paid to those features of social life which most nearly affect education. 'The Luo Girl' is not an attempt to record facts of exclusive interest to the sociologist nor to the psychologist, but it aims to give a picture of the factors at work in the character-building of Luo girls and in the shaping of their attitude to the society in which they live. In short, this book has been written to place certain data at the disposal of those interested in suggesting ways in which the lives of the Luo people can be improved both spiritually and materially. Plans for increased education for Luo girls will no doubt be more effective if the factors which help to shape the character and the attitude of the girls are carefully examined. The customs which have been described are not static and some of them have already ceased to retain their meaning in some districts. Thus there may be wide differences in customs among the Luo people, but it is the principles underlying these customs which should be of interest to us today.

[184]

Luo society, like many African societies, is undergoing change. The educator's task is a difficult one. It is only through a careful analysis of the factors which affect its social make-up that he can make an enlightened contribution to its improvement. I have therefore endeavoured in the foregoing chapters to put forward such material as might be of some help in making a balanced plan for the new developments which will affect Luo society.

116

116 TEXTS--a full set of pages from each processed source, arranged in page order, as a means of establishing the context for any particular slip. Sets are arranged in the numerical order of the sources. See also:
Library text 100



A NEW EARTH

An Experiment in
Colonialism

ELSPETH HUXLEY

[title page]

1960

CHATTO & WINDUS
LONDON

[p.3]

[pp.1-2 not processed]

CHAPTER 6

The Reluctant Luo

I

THE Luo are the second largest tribe in Kenya, coming next to the Kikuyu, and at the moment the most influential politically. This is because most Kikuyu politicians went into detention camps at the time of Mau Mau. While Kikuyu cats were away, Luo mice played vigorously, and grabbed the best political cheese. Speaking generally, the Luo are hefty, black-skinned, somewhat ox-like people with prominent teeth, a reputation for making good labourers and a rather slow-witted approach to life.

Needless to say, there are plenty of exceptions. Mr. Tom Mboya is a Luo and, while he has been called many things, 'slow-witted' has never been among them. Their natural food is fish and they are not by nature a cattle people. Their sturdy women smoke pipes with long clay stems. The Luo are not Bantu but Nilotic and their affinities, lingual and tribal, lie more with people in Uganda, such as the Acholi, than with any other Kenya tribes. They are surrounded, however, by Bantu peoples, with whom they share the wide, fertile, steamy and mainly flat basin that surrounds Lake Victoria. Around this basin lie hills from which warrior tribes look down on them, formerly as an eagle looked upon its prey. Far to the south lie the plains of Masai.

People who have dealt with other tribes find the Luo difficult. Their obstinacy is legendary, they are inclined to be ~~million and millions~~ but they are nimble-minded, subtle and, for those they like, have charm. Luo people can be brave and loyal but charm is rarely among their attributes. They are faintly Teutonic, in an African fashion.

So it is not surprising that of all the major Kenya peoples, leaving aside the Masai, the Luo have put up the stiffest

A NEW EARTH

177 resistance to the forward march of Progress in the agricultural
24 field. No spontaneous wish for any branch of Progress except
the political seems to have gripped the collective Luo mind.
Here, on these hot and apathetic lakeland flats, all the impetus
has come from Europeans.

It might be argued that the Government has no call to make
people change their ways against their will. This indeed is an
argument much used by Luo politicians. It is an old story:
should nanny sit by and watch Master Robert break up his
toys—in this case, ruin the soil, create acute erosion, turn the
whole of Nyanza province, which contains one-third of
Kenya's population, into a great rural slum?

24 Beyond question, that was going on. In Nyanza province
3 there are over two million cattle, about one to every two acres.
233 It would be a job to support this rate of stocking on the finest
pastures under skilled management; here it is utterly im-
possible. The cattle have become so small and shrivelled that
they are really not much larger than Great Danes, but their
sharp hoofs can still make and deepen gullies as they track
a way to springs. During the last three years, the output of
[433] crops in the province has halved, because yields have dropped
so sharply. Yet there are more and more mouths to feed.

24 All the evils of land abuse were here displayed in concen-
3 trated form. No manure, no rotations, no resting land under
grass; maize or cotton again and again, planted too late and
in the wrong manner; no trees, communal grazing destroyed
by useless skinny little beasts. It was not for want of trying by
the technical staff. For years they had been urging, persuading,
bullying, demonstrating, and they had scarcely dented Luo
[731] indifference and complacency. Famine was beginning to
[61] threaten these overcrowded areas—for the one thing the
people continued to produce more and more of was their
own kind.

II

648 And so the Government decided that the only salvation for
423 the Luo lay in dividing their communally owned land into
177 individual holdings. Land consolidation—the first stage

THE RELUCTANT LUO

towards enclosure—was proclaimed as the official policy and, in 1958, an area called Nyabondo picked out for an experiment. The edict went forth that everyone must define his holdings, mark them out and do, in fact, as the Kikuyu were doing with such success, not to mention the Nandi and Ekipagis and many others. 648
423
177

On the heels of the agriculturists with propaganda, local politicians moved in to tell the people it was all a trick to steal their land. Whether or no everyone believed this, no one dared to quarrel openly with the politicians, and not a single land-holder obeyed the Government.

'On 30th December, I called a meeting and closed the whole thing down,' Mr. Peter MacEntee, the D.C., told me. 'All right, I said, if you don't like it you needn't have it; run your land if you want to, as much as you like; what do we care? It's your funeral. Go ahead, and good luck to you. The agriculturists will leave you alone from now on, the instructors are pulling out to places where people want them; we understand now that this sort of thing is far too advanced for you. Keep up the bad work, and good-bye.'

Mr. MacEntee had evidently enjoyed this. In time the Luo, when in their mule-like frame of mind, subdue the greatest enthusiasts. But there was a sequel. [181]

Three weeks later, half a dozen men from Nyabondo turned up in my office. They had a little plan, with some *shamba* boundaries marked on it. "We have decided to consolidate," they said. "Here are the boundaries of the first *shambas* we've completed. We've marked out each man's fragments and exchanged them as you said. Now we want to lay them out on paper lines. Please send us an instructor and a European."

Whole of Nyabondo is completed—the first in central Nyanza. We know what to do now. Use the couldn't-care-less technique.

Another example: on the Kano plains, where rice grows under irrigation, until this year the agricultural department has looked after the bunds. They had endless trouble—arguments, sullen silences, even sabotage. They got the output up to 30,000 bags and there it stuck. Then they withdrew, 648
243
177
[433]

A NEW EARTH

648
243
433
197
telling the rice-growers they must make and maintain their own bunds. Last season the output jumped to 50,000 bags.

III

133 We drove to Nyabondo across the Kano plains. No one loves these plains. They are not only flat, they are absolutely treeless, dry, cracked, windswept, overcrowded, dusty and mean. The soil is 'black cotton', an especially viscous clay in which any vehicle bogs down irrevocably in wet weather—very fertile potentially, but soul-destroying to work. 'The people are like their soil,' I was told. 'They break your heart and yet you go on trying, something's there.'

137
[134] Everywhere are circles of a particular euphorbia, a dark-green, harsh, ugly plant that grows about eight feet tall and surrounds every group of huts. When a family head dies, his homestead is evacuated, his huts are left to rot away and only the euphorbia hedge remains, so the plains are covered with old circles as well as those in use. People have tried planting eucalyptus trees, but white ants eat them before they are man-high.

241
423 No individual cultivates his land in one piece. He digs or ploughs a patch here, a patch there, another bit over there, two more bits down the hill and a piece two miles off across the valley that belonged to his mother's uncle. This is known as fragmentation; it is almost universal among Bantu people, exists also among others such as the Luo, and is like a net spread for the feet of Progress in which he becomes enmeshed and stultified.

197
423
578 The first stage of land enclosure must be for every cultivator to exchange fragments with his neighbours, so that all his land is gathered together in one piece. It is the first stage and also exhorting men to exchange their blood, or their children. Suspicions dart out of their holes like bee-eaters. Won't so-and-so, my neighbour, get an unfair share? The bit he wants to swap for my piece is smaller. Give up my fertile patch by the river where bananas flourish for that barren stretch of hillside? Never! Somewhere there is a trick in all this. . . .

THE RELUCTANT LUO

Behind and beyond are old beliefs that are still alive. A man can lay upon a piece of land, when he is dying, an oath that binds his heirs to hold on to it for ever, and will destroy anyone who sells it out of the family—an entail with the sanction of magic. And then old homesteads on the Kano plains sheltering behind euphorbia hedges contain the bones of the deceased owner, who is buried under the floor of his hut. So consolidation may ask the son to exchange not merely a field of maize, but the bones of his father, the terrestrial anchor of his father's spirit. No wonder it is often too much to ask, and that politicians find these deep fires easy to fan. [668]

To reach Nyabondo we climbed a small escarpment, the beginning of the Kipsigis hills, left the car beside a track and walked to the farm of a young, pleasant-mannered school supervisor called James Onyango, one of the leaders of the enclosure movement. We sat under a tree near his new tin-roofed modern bungalow, above a shallow valley with a stream. The country here is gently rolling and thickly dotted with roofs of homesteads. Many people had gathered in a circle; the women sat together in bright cottons and gay head-scarves, plump and glossy, most of them with grave-faced, round-eyed babies sleeping in their arms or crawling about the grass beside them. This question of land touches the women at the core. James Onyango told his story in English. [361]

The idea of exchanging gardens came to us two years ago; we had heard of it in other places; most of us were interested, and asked the Government to advise. We held a meeting and agreed unanimously to consolidate, all of us within the Kadianga clan, fifty-nine families. In our clan are three sub-clans; each appointed three men to form a committee. Each of these three was a *m'guru*—an elder whose task is to look after the land, and one of these was made the president. [177]
[423]
[613]

We started to exchange our gardens, and at first everything was fair. Then came elections for the Legislative Council and the District Council. The candidates thought they would gain popularity by speaking against the land schemes. They campaigned among the people, and some listened. They had clever ways. In each sub-location they had an agent who [177]
[423]
[665]

A NEW EARTH

197 would write to the papers, or sign letters written for him,
423 saying the people were against these schemes. And so some of
663 us became confused. In this location we still wanted to
665 exchange land, but some of our neighbours turned against
it, and we had to stop.

'At the end of 1958 the opposition became very strong and
the D.C. called a meeting to decide. The opposition staged
another trick. They packed the meeting with supporters from
other locations, even women who knew nothing about it at
all. This was a noisy and a difficult *baraza*. Even with these
methods, when it came to a vote the meeting was evenly
divided. The casting vote was left to the D.C. He decided
against it, and so the scheme was closed.

197 'We who had always been in favour were greatly harmed.
423 We wanted the Government to bring water from the river,
and surveying had already started for a piped scheme. Some
of the elders went to the D.C. to ask him to change his mind,
but he refused. In January, he agreed to send two people to
Elgon Nyanza to see what was being done there. They saw it
all, and when they returned we elected *liguru* after the pattern
of the Elgon people. We called everyone together in groups,
men, women and children, to plant hedges round the *shambas*
that had been exchanged. I myself exchanged four pieces,
and in some cases I paid money and cattle to get all my land
(245) in one piece. We managed to plant hedges round two or three
shambas a day. Then we went to the D.C. and told him what
we had done and asked him to send an officer to help us plan
the use of our *shambas*. When he heard what we had done, he
agreed.

'Now we have enclosed all the land of our clan and we want
to have it registered. We asked the D.C., but there were still
six men who refused, and the D.C. would not do it until
everyone agreed. In the last few days two more have agreed,
so now there are only four against it. When they agree we
shall have titles to our land and then no one can upset the
work we have done.'

THE RELUCTANT LUO

IV

After Mr. Onyango had spoken, others said their piece, and I asked the opinions of some of the women, who will never speak unless they are directly asked. One replied, through an interpreter, in these words:

'I was against consolidation. My own land was fertile and I did not want to lose it and have other land not as good as mine. I tried to persuade my husband. We had many arguments, and the peace of our house was destroyed. At last I saw that I must give in if our home was to become peaceful again. We exchanged gardens, and then I saw that the new gardens were as fertile as my own. Now the men are helping women on the land and this is something that has never happened before. Men and women are working together. This is because the men see that there is money in growing crops and that bigger crops will make them rich.'

A second woman—both were middle-aged—spoke after her,

'I was not of that opinion. I wanted consolidation before it came here. If you have land near your home, you can work to improve it. If it is a long way off, you cannot put on manure. I understood the value of manure by seeing crops grown by the Better Farmers. Before, I had four *shamba* and one was over a mile away. Now they are all together and near my home. There is only one difficulty. Our custom is, when a son gets married, he leaves his father's *shamba* to start one of his own. I do not want to break this custom, but now I have a married son and there is nowhere for him to go.'

And a third woman, rather older, added her piece.

'When we started on consolidation too, the boundaries of land have caused many disputes and quarrels amongst us. When there are fixed boundaries, these quarrels fade away. So I wanted consolidation before it came, and my husband agreed. Now I can farm properly and put manure on the *shamba*; we have a shed for the cattle to stay in at night. Besides that, my husband employs two men. When he goes away I supervise them and the work is not so hard. Men and women never worked together before. Now they do, and this is a big thing.'

A NEW EARTH

177
423 is a big thing. When we get some money, I shall ask my husband for a beter house. We are in the way of progress now, but there is another thing: the Government must help us with our water we need a scheme to bring it—that is the biggest thing.'

It is often said hat women are the most conservative, and in some ways perlaps this may be so—especially in regard to marriage customs; but it struck me, almost everywhere I went, that it is the women who are most anxious to see these basic land reforms brought in, the men who oppose—not the old men so much as the younger, educated ones who have been to cities. Africa so often seems to reverse the expected order of things.

At any rate, there was no doubt of what these women thought about land reform. It is they, after all, the cultivators, the workers, who know where the shoe pinches, and no wonder they are out of patience with those young men of the towns who, while crying for political freedom, do their best to deny to their own women that measure of relief from hard, grinding toil which land consolidation and enclosure can afford.

423
613
[596] Among the Luo, everything is done by clans—extended families would be a more correct term. This group is called the *jokakwero* and consists of all the descendants of one grandfather. They hold heir land in common and each individual, as he marries, is allocated a *shamba* by the *liguru*, the land elders. In time he probably inherits cultivation rights over other pieces from various mothers, uncles and cousins, and that is how fragmentation arises. All grazing land is held in common, as among all other tribes.

177
256
613
[425] The *jokakwero* system is at once a strength and a weakness, as a *corporate* point of view. Livestock improvers regard it as an unmitigated curse.

'All the members of the group must agree to any sale of stock by any individual,' a vet told me. 'That makes de-stocking almost impossible, if only out of bloody-mindedness.' The livestock picture generally is a gloomy one. 'We are still trying to get across one or two of the most basic principles, such as dipping or spraying against ticks. Among the Kipsigis,

THE RELUCTANT LUO

over 5,000 people are spraying; here, with sixteen times the population, not 500 are. In the whole of Nyanza, with its 300,000 families, we have only sixty-seven Sahiwal bulls. 197
232

'On cattle, most of them won't budge. For instance, a man's prestige is somehow linked with that of his bulls, and they are most reluctant to castrate anything. Pioneers who try improved methods are unpopular and their neighbours are apt to gun for them; one man, for instance, had his pigs burnt alive. Still, we plug on. We have controlled rinderpest, if not East Coast fever—every year we give about 200,000 rinderpest inoculations. We export half a million hides and skins and are trying to improve their quality.'

It is perhaps worth noting that crops, whose improvement is considerable, are grown by women, but livestock is the exclusive concern of the men.

'In the years ahead,' this rather disillusioned vet concluded, 'we have only got to get across two basic principles: that a cow wants food all the year round, and that a calf needs milk. But it will take another twenty years before we make any real dent in Nyanza.'

On the other hand, some things unexpectedly catch on. A district officer who had seen fish-ponds in Malaya made half a dozen and stocked them with tilapia. Local people observed the ponds and, without any serious propaganda, dug others like them. Now there are over a thousand in Nyanza. They cost nothing, the Government provides free fingerlings and is full of plans for fish-ponds everywhere as the basis of a small industry. 197
228

V

Maseno is a dynamo of education. It was started by the Church Missionary Society. 'The general plan of campaign was based on the model of Iona,' wrote the Rev. John Willis, later Bishop of Uganda, who with Bishop Tucker chose the site in 1904. On 14th January, 1906, the first resident missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Savile, moved in—there was not much to move into, merely a grass hut under a tree that housed both the Saviles and a primitive dispensary. Nearly 197
871

A NEW EARTH

797
891

fifty years later their son, Mr. Paddy Savile, after many years' service in Tanganyika, was to become Chief Agriculturalist to the Government and help to make a path for Progress through the land of his birth. Maseno mission was envisaged as 'a Christian base from which the Gospel might be carried far and wide into the surrounding country, with a school for the sons of Luo chiefs at which future leaders of the country would be trained in a Christian atmosphere.'

[291]
[436]
[301]

Four small boys called Onduso, Odindo, Owiti and Oroa were drafted from Kaimosi to form a nucleus and every 'chief' was asked to contribute two sons. 'Chief' was an arbitrary term, and the leading Luo objected strongly to the disappearance of their sons, probably regarding it as another form of slavery. In those days the Luo went stark naked, used beads or hoes for currency, and prized most highly the black ostrich feathers which warriors wore as head-dresses.

'In five years' time a hundred small boys from the school were sent out, two by two, for a fortnight at a time, to teach in Kisumu and in the villages. Then they came back to Maseno for a month for further teaching. In this way the original Iona idea began to be realized and Maseno became a base of Christian influence.' Bishop Willis developed this idea in a letter: 'It affords a shelter amid a sea of temptation; it makes Christian teaching applicable and Christian living a possibility.'*

[873]
[874]

So from four small and doubtless bewildered boys under a tree, Maseno developed until by the time of its golden jubilee it embraced primary, intermediate and secondary schools, a teacher-training college, a Jeanes school for adult education, a college for agricultural instructors and veterinary scouts. Even the girls had by this time been included, although their education for years lagged far behind that of their brothers.

668

At the time of my visit this part of Nyanza was a-buzz with rumour and diatribe, for the District Council in Kisumu had just been dissolved by Governor's decree. To balance the official line on this, I asked to meet a firebrand or two, and everyone agreed that Maseno was the place for a crackle of

[113]

*From *Fifty Years in Nyanza*, by Elisabeth Richards, M.A. Maseno Press. 1956.

THE RELUCTANT LUO

firebrands. So in a small brick room put up by Bishop Tucker 668
in 1911, and now the secondary school's common-room, I
met a bunch of schoolmasters, all fluent in English, well-
informed and politically-minded.

I put to them the question that most puzzled me; land 423
reforms are unquestionably progressive and of benefit to 668
Africans; by raising living standards they will advance the 197
prospect of self-government; why, then, do so many educated
Africans appear to oppose them?

The answer I got was unexpected. Mr. Samwell Ayan, a
history teacher, a Makerere graduate, head of the Kenya
Teachers' Union and an elected member of the District
Council that was embroiled in trouble, spoke impressively—
and with moderation and logic.

'People are not getting justice,' he said. 'Men are losing land 197
they are entitled to because of bribery and corruption in the 423
African Courts. Everyone is being bribed—land elders, chiefs, 668
witnesses. Yes, from the African Courts a man can take his case 668
before the D.C., but what can the D.C. do? He sees only the 692
evidence in front of him; it is all rigged; the man loses his
land. I know of many cases like that. The Courts are rotten—
a washout.

'I know of a case where the president of the Court altered
all the evidence after it had been given and sent it up to the
superior Court. When the plaintiff heard the false evidence
read out, he was hopelessly confused. Clerks take bribes to
keep appeal cases beyond the date when the right to appeal
lapses. This is being done even in Kisumu. All the land elders
can be bribed. The bugbear for land is corrupt.

'What should be done? First, hear land cases before every-
one in the location who has, or is entitled to, land—a real
people's court. Then, make tape-recordings of evidence in the
lower courts; if the evidence is changed, everyone will know.
And let the district officer take all land cases so that he hears
everything.

'It is because of this corruption and unfairness that people
oppose land consolidation. All the same, it has got to come.
It is progressive. But do not let it be forced.'

Mr. Ayan spoke with sincerity and even passion. This 668
668

A NEW EARTH

662 question of bribery and corruption crops up everywhere and
668 all concerned on the official side recognize it as their deepest enemy. But when I put Mr. Ayan's points to them they were a little sceptical. 'Of course there is bribery,' they said, 'but it is not as bad as that. And it is not the people who oppose land reform, it is the politicians.' Mr. Ayan had just sent a telegram to the Governor asking for the removal of the 'reactionary D.C.' in Kisumu, so relations were naturally a bit strained.

VI

311 On the way to Maseno we had passed the ostensible cause
199 belli between District Council and Government: the Kisiani
648 hills, a barren, rocky bluff entirely denuded of vegetation and
134 a scene of the most gruesome erosion, given over to goats
233 browsing on boulders and any indomitable weed that had managed to germinate. This place had been leased by the District Council to the Government for the purpose of afforestation and about 800 acres of trees had been planted at a cost of £13,000.

311 Afforestation is unpopular. Goats were allowed to destroy
648 the Kisiani seedlings and, when the forest department put
668 up fences, people came and tore them down in the night.
199 Others started to cultivate in defiance not only of the terms of the lease, but of regulations which forbid cultivation on steep hillides. All this, in the official view, was part of a deliberate political campaign to stir up anti-Government feeling.

The Kisiani quarrel brought to a head had feeling between the Central Nyanza District Council and the Government. All the Councillors are African save for the chairman, who is the D.C. Most of its senior technical staff are European and, in particular, it employs (as do all District Councils with large revenues) a fully qualified accountant to manage its finances.

Those elected Councillors most anxious for unrestricted freedom objected strongly to this accountant. Africans, they said, should have the spending of African money without European interference. Officials retorted that in proper,

THE RELUCTANT LEO

honest accounting lies the only defence against wholesale bribery and corruption—against the sort of thing Mr. Ayan had complained about so powerfully. 311
648
668
177

In the midst of this controversy the Council, with its elected majority, repudiated the lease of the Kisiani afforestation area and refused to take steps to stop sabotage of the plantations. The Government retorted by demanding repayment of the £13,000 spent upon them. This would have meant raising the Council's annual rate from eighteen to twenty-one shillings on each adult male.

This demand to increase the rate was, of course, turned down flat by the elected Councilloers, who in their anger sacked the accountant, appointed a totally unqualified African at £1,000 a year to succeed him, and threatened to dismiss other European staff on grounds of race. They also voted large increases in their own salaries and allowances. [186]

Naturally I asked Mr. Ayan's views. The Kisiani rouble, in his account, boiled down to a number of misunderstandings. The individuals who owned cultivation rights in the hills had not, he said, ever fully understood the matter, it had not been properly explained. They thought the trees would be theirs, not common property. They had never given their permission on paper, with marks or signatures. The matter was explained to them by an unpopular chief who did not wait to hear all their objections. When they grazed their goats in the plantations they thought they were on their own property and were much aggrieved when they were fined. They had no land elsewhere. Land hunger was so acute as to be a more important matter even than marriage. 'If a man should lose his wife he can buy another; but once the land is gone you cannot buy any more.' 311
177
648

It looked like one more failure in public relations. But the officials denied this. 'We explained over and over again,' they said. 'Aways, news-sheets, radio . . . Everyone had a chance to put his case. No, behind it is the old story—politicians spreading rumours that it's all a trick to steal the land.' [668]

[pp. 110-151 not processed]

21: Huxley Q, T-5 (no date) 1960 FL11 Luo

Masa; FL12

133
231
993



15 The Rev. David Makinyo, a Masai person, on his ranch; and some of the lions who share his country

136
133



[facing p. 128]

21: Huxley Q, T-5 (no date) 1960 FL11 Loo
 Masq; FL12

133
 136
 139



26 Where trees keep out Masai cattle, grass, trees, rivers and wild game
 still survive; and finally the lioness enjoys a drink

133
 136



[facing p. 127]

CHAPTER 10

Masai Herds and Mara Lions

177 THE Masai have won respect by their contempt for civilization and all that it has offered them. For half a century Europeans have been tempting them with all the material bribes, indeed even non-material ones, for which every Bantu and Nilotic people is avid. There is scarcely an African of the fat lands who would not sell his soul for a school certificate. The Masai have rejected school certificates with a proud and lofty disdain.

233 Will a certificate fatten a bullock or swell the belly of a
 182 cow? Masai hearts are with their cattle; they desire no finer
 182 destiny for a son than to walk in the dust of a larger herd
 183 than his father's. The young man who dreams of glory sees
 fine white bulls and brindled cows and green grass knee-high,
 he does not see the stone bungalow, the shining motor-car,
 the well-cut suit, the framed diploma so alluring to his darker
 fellow-countrymen. He likes to wear his hair in matted
 302 pigtails smeared with red ochre and rancid butter, to stand
 1516 with one foot against the other knee, to eat a compound of
 242 bullock's blood and curdled milk, to carry his long spear and
 411 to keep his women in their beads and coils and fly-infested
 178 mud burrow as his ancestors did—those ancestors whose lion
 head-dresses and painted shields filled the hearts of lesser
 breeds with terror, and won the right of conquest over the
 steppes of eastern Africa from their northern Somali deserts
 to their southern tsetse bush.

For the Masai have pride, and pride is a quality we recoil from in ourselves and half-admire, half-deplore in others. An Englishman today must stamp with the hob-nail boots of equality upon the little shoots of pride that cannot help but spring up in his heart; but when he sees the first, free growth of it in others, an envious respect attacks him. For

MASAI HERDS AND MARA LIONS

Westerners the Masai have become the symbol of a vanished aristocracy, a lost cause they can afford to keep as a household pet who has the spunk to stand up to its master. Feb 1979

The Masai way of life is certainly doomed. For a while it may continue, but nothing in the end can resist the pressures of Western materialism. The British have protected it by freezing a tribal pattern of land ownership, enshrined in a treaty to which the Masai hold with all the desperation of a man clinging to a raft when the waters are rising. That treaty, which confirms them in possession of their grazing-grounds 'for ever', was made to keep out Europeans. Now it is no longer white settlers who threaten them, but black ones. Will a treaty made for the one purpose serve for the other? Only while the British enforce it; when politicians of the land-hungry Kikuyu and Luo peoples occupy the seats of power in Nairobi, the borders of Masailand seem unlikely to remain intact.

For here lie the last reserves of fertile, well-watered and unused land in Kenya, hitherto protected by the strongest guardian of the land in Africa: the tsetse fly. In the last ten years, modern techniques of mastering tsetse-borne diseases, and the tsetse fly itself, have reached a point where all this land could be thrown open to settlement. The question now is partly one of expense, and partly of politics. The Masai themselves do not cultivate. So long as their treaty with the British Government holds good, they will resist to the last man the opening of their land to settlement by the cultivating tribes. 3-18

II

The Tanganyika-Kenya border cuts through the Masai's territory, most of which is open, semi-arid grassland useless for any purpose other than seasonal grazing by scrub cattle, even if water could be tapped by boreholes. But in the west, where Masailand approaches Lake Victoria, and on the Mau escarpment's south-western slopes, soil and rainfall would support a sizeable population of cultivators. 133

The Masai, numbering about 85,000, keep about one 000

233
199
55
[61]

A NEW EARTH The Maasai,
numbering about 25,000, keep about one
million head of scrub cattle, and 660,000 sheep and goats.
They could export fat steers and lambs, but have done next to
nothing to improve the quality of their animals. This is
because they do not need the cash. There are old men living
in mud hovels with little but ear-rings, a spear and a blanket
who could at any minute realize several thousand pounds
for their cattle. Scarcely one of them could not afford a motor-
car if he wanted one, probably a Jaguar at that. The plain
fact is they do not want motor-cars, or beds, or kitchen sinks,
or radios, or refrigerators, or washing machines: they just
want cattle, which they have, and which the processes of
nature will increase for them without their having to do any
disagreeable work.

It is an *impasse*. The whole machinery of modern society,
modern trade, modern development, has been halted by the
Maasai's refusal to keep up with the Jones's, or the Kamaus
in this case. It is like a great Britannia aircraft grounded by a
midge in the works. Modern civilization runs on avarice as
cars on petrol, and if there is no pump where you can fill up
with avarice, you simply stay where you are.

But even the Maasai are not really free of avarice: it merely
takes a different form. If they do not want bicycles and
trousers, they do want more cattle, and this has led them
into a great error. Instead of rejecting everything the West
offered them, they accepted the hypodermic syringe of the
vets. First of all the vets put an end to rinderpest, and then,
rather less successfully, dealt with various other diseases that
were keeping their herds in check.

233
199
185

No doubt it would have needed superhuman self-denial on
the part of the Maasai to have rejected this magical means of
ending the periodic epidemics that had wiped out all but a
rump of their cherished herds. Yet these were the means by
which nature had kept herds and habitat in balance. Vegeta-
tion, controlled by constant factors like rainfall and soil
structure, cannot multiply as creatures of the animal kingdom
can, and do. The fact remains that to accept the vet's syringe
was fatal to the Maasai, and to offer it to them, as the Govern-
ment did, without also insisting upon some means of keeping
down the livestock population, was an act of remarkable

MASAI HERDS AND MARA LIONS

imbecility—or perhaps not remarkable, since nothing has been more characteristic of the half-century of European intervention in Africa than the slap-happy introduction of bright, well-meaning ideas by enthusiasts of all kinds, without any regard for their long-term consequences. 233
199
185

Anyway, vets controlled diseases, livestock multiplied and their hoofs and mouths destroyed the precarious grass cover of the plains. The result is that, except where the tsetse fly remains in control, the Masai are living in country poised upon the edge of desherdhood. Some of it has gone over the edge, some hovers on the borderline, some has not reached it yet. And so pressure mounts upon those regions that are still protected by the tsetse fly. 231
199
311
185

Overcrowded people outside want to get in, overstocked Masai themselves want to take their herds where grazing is still rich and deep. If either succeed, unless they adopt very different methods, they will destroy those regions as surely as they have damaged their present inheritance. Agronomists and vets do not want to see these last remaining areas opened up without strict control. But governments are terrified of controlling anyone by what may be represented as harsh measures, and administrators have inclined to caution since the Masai speared to death a D.C. who was persuading them to sell some steers. So the matter, like many others, rests in a state of suspended flux, and everyone hopes for good rains.

III

Down on the Kenya-Tanganyika border, not so very long ago, there lived an Englishman who kept in touch with the world by carrier-pigeon. For three or four months of the year no vehicle could reach him, and even in the dry weather it was a long, hard, bumpy seventy-mile journey from Narok, where the road ends. The aeroplane has changed all that. An hour's pleasant flight from Nairobi brought us comfortably to rest beside a tributary of the Mara river. 000

First we flew over the Mau, that range of mountains forming the south-western wall of the Rift Valley. Covered with forests of cedars and olives and, higher up, of bamboos, the 133
137

A NEW EARTH

133
[137] Mau is the source of all the rivers watering the western half of Masailand, Kipsigis and part of the Rift Valley. The birth-place of innumerable streams, it is, in theory, protected by its status as a forest reserve.

185
311 Looking out from the small yellow aircraft expertly handled by June Wright, one of the best commercial pilots in East Africa, one could quickly see how different theory was from practice, here as elsewhere. In a forest reserve no one is allowed to fell trees, cultivate, start fires or graze livestock. In less than half an hour, I counted seventeen active fires and saw the shambles created by innumerable others. Whole ridgebacks of the mountain, sticking up like black spines, were as bare as slag-heaps and already runnelled and creased by gully erosion. Older fires were still smoking in some of these devastated areas; one could see the forest being eaten into like a great fur pelt attacked by moths.

As sure as fate, one day there will be no more water for cattle in the streams below. 'God is punishing us,' will say the Masai: but it will not be God, it will be themselves. The
[233] streams are already shrinking and the Masai are driving their herds farther into the hills to find grazing. They cannot take cattle into forest and so they burn a way in. They are creeping upwards, spreading destruction as they go in order to escape the consequences of destruction they have already caused.

[222] Other fires are started by honey-hunters who burn down trees to smoke out the bees. Often, in the forest, you can see blackened hollow ordars and olives killed by fires tucked into the roots. If the foliage is dry and the wind right, the fire will spread and get out of hand.

563 And then there are 'acceptees': a clumsy term given to men of other tribes who are settling in Masailand, family by family, with the permission of Masai elders. They are tenants: but it is very unlikely that they will ever go.

[67] In South Nyanza and in Kipsigis it is reckoned that upwards of two thousand families a year are crossing the southern border into Masailand and Tanganyika. In recent years a
[582] good many Masai have married Kikuyu or Kamba wives
[842] because so many of their own women are sterile; at one time there was quite a trade in Kikuyu girl-children, exchanged for cattle.

MASAI HERDS AND MARA LIONS

cattle. The Kikuyu and Kamba have brought in the habit of eating ground maize. And so when a man of some other tribe asks a Masai elder if he may cultivate a patch of land, and offers in return to supply maize, the elder will often agree. The cultivator will clear his patch and grow a crop; next season, he will ask permission to bring his wife and family; soon his cooking-stones, his household goods, his thatched hut are installed; he is there, probably for ever. His daughters may grow up to marry Masai men. That is the way the Masai doom will overtake them—as a people, as a warrior race.

Some of these accepters, used to the cold, are creeping up into the Mau, burning the trees to make their *shambas* as they have done before in other places. Their actions are illegal, but there is no one to enforce the law and no one dares to do so. This country the Masai know to be theirs. If they agree to let people cultivate in the forest, who is the Government to gainsay them? Attempts to remove intruders might well be met by force, and that is a thing no Government dares to contemplate. It was an attempt to use force, after all, for the ultimate good of the people, that led to the Hola disaster. If the tenant were to be hurt, and the Masai to be angered, and a fracas to arise, denunciations of colonialist oppression and tyranny would thunder from the benches of the House of Commons and repercuss all through the Secretariat. So the Mau forests burn.

IV

From our camp on the Talek, a tributary of the Mara, Dr. Philip Glover showed us a little of a twelve research project which combines the excitement of scientific discovery with that of tracking in the old-fashioned, footprint-in-the-sand way. A tough, enthusiastic and handsome young man called Jungle Smith, helped by several veterinary scouts, has cut tracks in the bush to make a grid three miles square. Each track has been cleared of vegetation so as to leave a path receptive to the footprints of animals.

Each morning, scouts patrol the grids with notebooks in which they enter every spoor they see. By about eleven o'clock

A NEW EARTH

654
136 the numbers and variety of every animal that had entered or left during the night had been recorded. From these notebooks Mr. Smith plots the movements of the game and eventually produces charts which show the numbers of each species that has visited the grid over the year, so that their seasonal behaviour can be observed. In the last six months about fifteen different species have been identified.

The next process is to capture flies in nets. Once you know the habits of your particular tsetse—there are eight species hereabouts and these were *Glossinids*—they are surprisingly easy to spot taking their ease in the bush; they cling underneath the branches of thorn-trees, and the trick is to peer against the light until you see their silhouettes. Each fly is then squashed on paper and dispatched to a laboratory in London where its blood is analysed with such accuracy that the kind of animal it has last fed on can be diagnosed. The object is to discover more about the relationship between game and insect, so as to arrive at ways of controlling tsetse flies which do not involve, as most current methods do, the wholesale destruction of animals and vegetation.

Before this work was done—and it is new in Kenya—people assumed that all forms of game acted as host to the tsetse and must therefore be wiped out if areas were to be cleared for cattle-ranching. This was the theory behind the appalling slaughter that has taken place in other parts of Africa in the interests of tsetse control. Kenya has never used this indiscriminate policy, but in Southern Rhodesia over 600,000 game animals have been shot by tsetse control officers working for the Government. These modern blood analyses have revealed some unexpected facts. Of all the flies squashed on the Tsetse and subsequently analysed, nearly 45 per cent had fed on warthog. Next in order came giraffe—a long way behind with 14 per cent; then buffalo with under 10 per cent. And at the very bottom of the list were waterbuck, bushbuck and impala, each with one single squashed fly out of over four hundred specimens.

The conclusion to be drawn is that many of the species mowed down with the rest in battues of indiscriminate slaughter need never have been shot at all. From a 'typical'

MASAI HERDS AND MARA LIONS

point of view they could have safely been ignored, at any rate until the researchers had discovered whether the fly, deprived of its normal food, would switch to other species. And tsetse flies are, in general, very conservative. 654
136

It seems to be a rule that people who enjoy their work grow fond of whatever creature, object or device they work with. One can understand shepherds becoming fond of sheep, or engine-drivers of locomotives, although it has always surprised me to find how attached sanitary engineers, for instance, appear to become to drains, or helminthologists to tapeworms. Following this rule, Jungle Smith had become devoted to tsetse; one of his amusements was to let a fly settle on his arm and bury its proboscis in his flesh, and to watch it gradually swell like an inflated balloon as it filled its belly with his blood. Then he gazed after it with affection as it lumbered off, replete, for a nice sleep, and no more blood-sucking for a couple of days. The gorging process took about two minutes.

v

Until the recent discovery of drugs which kill trypanosomes in the blood of infected animals, almost the only effective way of tackling tsetse-borne disease was to clear the bush so as to drive away the flies. The pioneer of this method—or rather methods; it became a complex science—was Mr. C. F. M. Swynnerton, for many years Game Warden and Director of Tsetse Research in Tanganyika and the father of the author of Kenya's present agrarian plan. For twenty years, bush-clearing held the field. Often it was found sufficient to cut down certain types of bush only, because of the fly's conservatism: each species likes so much shade, so more and so less, or certain kinds of tree. 654

All this time the fly was actually spreading. During a slow build-up of knowledge millions of flies were examined, weighed, fed on different foods; their wing-beats were counted, their rate of respiration graphed, the humidity of the soil in which they pupated was tested, their least preference or idiosyncrasy carefully recorded; thousands were

A NEW EARTH

64 marked with luminous paint to trace their movements; all over East Africa, people bicycled about the bush with sacks on their backs to attract them and grew to pensionable age catching them in nets, digging their pupae out of the sand, keeping them in test-tubes and cages, even studying micro-organisms which appeared to be their enemies.

Seldom has so much careful, detailed, expert study been given to one kind of insect. Some of the many facts discovered have been used ingeniously. Tsetse flies, for instance, probably mate only once in their lives. A current experiment is to expose a number of pupae to controlled doses of radiation which sterilizes them, and then to release the males so that gradually the fly population will die out.

The expense of bush-clearing is its principal handicap, and the quick regeneration of the bush. By itself, it could never have conquered tsetse fly in Africa. In recent years, chemists have discovered how to synthesize drugs which kill the trypanosomes in the blood, and which will prevent infection. The main drug in use at present, Antrycide pro-salt, will protect cattle for about four months.

No one doubts that, in time, the chemists will improve on this, and cattle-owners like the Masai will be able to take their herds anywhere they please. The battle is not yet wholly won; trypanosomes have already shown a tendency to develop resistance to the drugs, and there will no doubt be disappointments and setbacks. But, by and large, it can only be a matter of time before areas like the Mara are opened to hungry herds from overstocked pastures elsewhere.

Several experiments are under way to discover how things could be managed so as to avoid disaster to the land, and at the same time make a profit for its custodians. One such is the Ol Choro Olorowa ranch which the vets are running on behalf of the District Council at Narok. On some 21,000 acres young beasts were to be fattened and sold at a profit, but profits have been shy because of various setbacks, such as an outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia and an army worm invasion. Now it seems that the acreage is too small and the Masai have so far refused to enlarge it. So the vets have not yet succeeded in bringing home to the Masai cattle-owner the basic fact that

MASAI HERDS AND MARA LIONS

M
179
233
K
654
K
[406] good management on modern ranching lines will bring him in hard cash.

I saw the ranch mainly from the air. Lines of bush, cleared by bulldozers dragging giant chains between them, lie neatly along the contour like windrows in a hayfield. Soon the six or seven thousand acres that have been cleared will be fenced, and so managed that star-grass will cover them and steers fatten twice as quickly as they normally do. The snag, of course, is the Masai indifference towards cash.

M
177
871 Yet even here the seeds of change begin to germinate. There are schools now in all Masai centres, Masai students at Makerere, the start of a trickle of Masai teachers, doctors, administrators, vets. One has a Cambridge degree in geography, one is a Legislative Councillor. The shell of Masai indifference has been pricked.

M
177
233
193
238
234
M
[401] The puncture so far is tiny, but time will enlarge it and one day, not so far away either, the whole shell may crack. Already a Masai parson, the Rev. Daudi Mokinoyo, has fenced off 2,000 acres of communal grazing where he fattens steers bred from improved bulls, has a simple milking bail and makes ghee. Elsewhere, half a dozen other Masai have fenced in grazing land. When the railway took a pipeline off Mt. Kilimanjaro, they set up watering points for Masai cattle along its course, and in return one section of the tribe, the Il Kisongo, agreed to operate a pasture-management plan, financed by a grazing fee, which is acting as an entry-point for new ideas.

When these movements spread, as they seem bound to do, the doom of the game will be accomplished. For game cannot co-exist with modern pasture management. Unless the Masai come to see game as an asset of high value, it will go here, as it has on European farms, and for the same reasons: it will go down before the fence, the improved pasture and the need to keep the land free of disease.

133
423
804
291

21 May 1946 (see date) 1946 FL11

KIRUNA FL10



of Marking out a new farm for a Kikuyu landowner: a consolidation committee, with [unclear], at work

[Facing p. 209]

244
327
291



[499]

cy Children of the new Kikuyuhand: cabbage-picking for the co-operative,
and first steps at school

892
352
291



[Facing p. 224]

21. Husley Q, T-3 (no date) 1960 FL11 Loo

K. KUYU FL10

142
291
423
622



68 A pioneer of land
reform: Chief
Mubaya of Nyeri.
Below, a Kikuyu
farmer receives title-
deeds to his land

142
291
423



[Facing p. 225]

CHAPTER 13

The Enclosure of Nyeri

13 **T**HE forest belt at first was dark as fur, turned light green when we flew above the bamboos, and then we were over brown, tufted pastures with steep black gorges, winding streams like veins and queer giant groundsel on the end of tall stalks. Next came grey-brown, inhospitable scree, bare of all vegetation and all life, even that of birds, like (one imagines) a part of the moon. Yet some life there must be in the water, for the lakes caught up in gorges are green, from algae presumably; there is nothing to reflect but black towering rock-faces and a hard blue sky. As we approached Mt. Kenya's peak the rocks grew more and more savage, like the spines of prehistoric armoured beasts, snow gleamed among the cliffs and we came to glaciers, and to lakes black as the pit.

If you fly over a mountain it is hard to know exactly which the peak is, the whole surface below is so jagged and fierce, streaked with snow looking rather dirty, from wind-blown dust perhaps. Superintendent Bearcroft, the pilot, pointed out the Lewis glacier which leads up towards the peak of Bacion, called after a Masai lelele, and there was a little hut on the snow and the dark speck of a man beside it.

How absurdly and unfairly easy it seemed to float above him sitting back in an arm-chair! One thought of all the people who had toiled up the scree and towering rocks and treacherous glaciers, of all the mountain-sickness, frostbite, snow-blindness and dangers—even with modern climbing techniques, Kenya is exacting. And here was I, without the least effort looking down upon the topmost peak on which Sir Halford Mackinder was the first human being, so far as anyone knows, to set foot, in 1899. It was certainly a very

A NEW EARTH

much more enjoyable way than his to get to the top, indeed over the top, of Mt. Kenya.

Light green, dark green, appeared below us, then unclothed ridges with higgledy-piggledy little squares of shade marked in green and chocolate brown: and then, before we landed, a detour to look down upon an amazing pale pink froth on the tops of the trees—Cape Chestnuts in full bloom along the Amboseli river. Soon Nyeri hill came into sight, a curious lump of greenery, and we were down on the airstrip on the other side of the mountain.

It was in the three Kikuyu districts south and south-west of the mountain that the project of land consolidation started and has been carried through. In the districts of Nyeri, Fort Hall and Kiambu every square foot of land claimed by an owner has been brought together into compact holdings and each landowner has his valid title. Over a million acres have been dealt with and some 200,000 holdings registered.

II

The need for consolidation arose out of a custom far more developed here than anywhere else in the country—the fragmentation of land. A survey made in 1950 showed the average number of fragments into which each man's holding was split to be six to eight; some of the fragments might be seven or eight miles from his home. Individual cases were, of course, far worse than this. One man in the Nyeri district was found to have forty fragments, the smallest measuring 0.01 of an acre and some of them five miles from his homestead, adding up to just under twelve acres. Another had twenty-nine fragments amounting to three acres. The smallest fragment on record was a single banana plant. Yet a wife might have to walk five miles to tend this one small plot. In these three districts there was probably not a single holding all in one piece.

Before describing how this extraordinary situation has been dealt with, an outline of how it came about may be useful. It arose out of the system of inheritance of the Kikuyu people, which is typical of Bantu tribes. Two young officers, Mr. Tony

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

^{TWO YOUNG OFFICERS, Mr. TOM}
Sutton and Mr. John Golda, carried out a detailed study of a single area in Kiambu to discover how the complex land pattern had originated, and what follows here is a summary of their findings. They took as their sample an area of 1,000 acres known to its inhabitants as the *ndari ya Igi*. 114 423

Whereas most Africans, as we have seen, were able to take uninhabited land from the bush when they needed it, the forest into which the Kikuyu spread was already occupied, if only very sparsely, by people called the Aathi, small and primitive hunters who lived on game and honey. When the Kikuyu moved in, which in the Kiambu district was probably about 1830, they treated with the Aathi elders and, by paying goats and honey, acquired rights over certain stretches of forest—perhaps a belt between two glades, or a ridge between two rivers—regarded as the hunting ground of a particular Aathi family. The Aathi, of course, did not realize that the Kikuyu would cut down the trees and squeeze them out; they thought that they would share the forest's bounty with the Kikuyu, who would grow crops here and there in patches, to everyone's benefit. 175 423 425

When a Kikuyu acquired rights over a stretch of land this became his *ndari*, or family estate. Several people sometimes joined together to acquire a large *ndari*. This was the case with the *ndari ya Igi*; thirteen families shared it. 423 (421)

The head of a Kikuyu family, and its land authority, is the *muramai*. This office is inherited by his eldest son. After moving in to an *ndari*, the *muramai* divided it first among his wives and any married sons; if there was more land than they needed, he might allow a number of *ahai*, or tenants, to cultivate. Sometimes these *ahai* helped with the purchase price—about one goat to five acres—by lending goats to the family. These goats had eventually to be repaid. 423 424 425 425

Now the first complication arises: often an *ndari* was bought in instalments. This was the original form of fragmentation: each member of the family cleared and cultivated a strip of land in each instalment. A good many *ahai* moved in, and it was perhaps at this time that the principle of redemption became established. That is to say, if one of the *ahai* lent goats to help pay an instalment, the clan elders 423 425 427

A NEW EARTH

423
424
425
426
427
could at any time return an equal number of goats to him and, when they did so, he had to pack up and go. It was bad manners, however, to give him criticism openly; the custom was to surround his shade with branches at dawn; when he saw them, he knew that he had received his notice.

(m) In later years, this system of redemption blocked nearly all forms of progress. If a man could be evicted at any time by the return of some goats lent by his grandfather, it was obviously no good trying to plant a permanent crop like coffee or build a permanent house. If you did so, the clan elders would cock an eye at the improvements and, if they possibly could, dispossess you; endless cases of this nature came before the African courts. This system of redemption by simple repayment without compensation continued until it was stopped by a District Council by-law in 1952.

428
429
430
431
432
The *adzi* as *Ipi* was bought by thirteen families in seven instalments. In each of the instalments, all the wives of all the elders and their married sons were given plots to cultivate. Each senior wife chose her own, and the shapes were often peculiar. One was a strip three feet wide stretching nearly a mile from river to river. Another twisted about all over the countryside like a snake. An old man gave the explanation: when his mother was first married, her husband told her to mark out her shade according to custom, and she was so happy that she ran joyfully about the countryside putting in pegs wherever she felt inclined.

433
434
435
436
437
Each time a man took a new wife, he gave her a piece of 'the man's plot' he had reserved for future use, and each of his senior wives gave her also a small piece of their own shade. In return, she gave each senior wife a bit of the shade she had just received from her husband. Since each senior wife would have a shade in each of the *adzi*'s seven instalments, every new wife would start off with eight separate plots. When her sons grew up and married, every son would receive a share of each of her eight plots. Finally, when the woman died, each of his sons would receive a bit of 'the man's plot', as well as his share of his mother's different shades.

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

When one considers the ramifications of this system, such as widows remarrying, and childless women's plots being split among all the other wives' children, and many other contingencies, one is amazed that the Kikuyu elders could keep a grasp on the situation at all. All the records were in memories, nothing could be written down; but so retentive are Kikuyu minds that every elder could recite the history of every plot and fragment in his family's possession, down to the number of the kids dropped by each of the goats paid in his grandfather's time.

423
153

Nevertheless, land ownership and inheritance was the most fruitful source imaginable of disputes, feuds and court cases. As time went on, the flow of cases thickened until it threatened to silt up the whole stream of Kikuyu life. To waste of time was added waste of money, as a class of professional lawyers arose to batter on the illiterate. By 1959, it was reckoned that the Kikuyu were frittering away at least £100,000 a year on land cases.

423
428
578
691

The thing had got out of hand and the Kikuyu were the first to recognize it. Whenever I asked what had persuaded the people to accept such fundamental changes, I got the answer: 'We were tired of land cases. They were wasting our wealth. They were like a heavy load on the back of every man.'

But although many people thought this, perhaps almost everyone, very few dared to say so publicly before the rise and fall of Mau Mau. The political leaders of the Kikuyu opposed land consolidation timorously and without scruple, spreading every lie and rumour to turn people against it on the grounds that it was nothing but a trick to steal their land. Most of the Kikuyu leaders, at any rate those with the intelligence of Jomo Kenyatta who led the campaign, knew all this to be entirely untrue. Yet at every point, and by means of every deceit and subterfuge, they urged their people to reject every advance that would ease their lives and improve their condition.

127
423
668

A NEW EARTH

668 The object of such Kikuyu leaders, understandably enough no doubt, was to shake off European rule and achieve unrestricted self-government. But obviously, self-government based upon a prosperous peasantry and a productive agriculture would have better prospects than self-government based upon a degenerate tribalism in whose ambit no one could plant so much as a banana tree without fearing that someone else would dig it up or bring an action about it. The origins of Mau Mau, however, were not logical, they were rooted in a deep, emotional hatred not merely of Europeans but of all they represented, of the whole Western world, the whole twentieth century. They belonged to a perverted romanticism blindly hoping to restore a lost tribal simplicity, and to do so by means of murder, torture and obscenity, the Black Man up to date.

197
623
668 Until the defeat of Mau Mau, every attempt to tackle at its source the worsening land position of the Kikuyu met with a stubborn, sullen resistance due mainly to fear of being at the least branded as a traitor, at the worst having one's hut burnt down and one's cattle hamstringed. The bulk of the people simply held back and kept mum. Bolder spirits who defied the prevailing wind of politics suffered for their nonconformism. In the years just before Mau Mau a great many cattle-dips were sabotaged, terraces broken, stores burnt and crops destroyed. As matters worked towards a climax, the attacks advanced from property to people, and men who had listened to the Europeans were strangled in the darkness and burnt alive in their huts. It needed a very bold man, in those days, to walk into the mounting gale and openly collaborate with officers of the Government.

IV

159
624
668 Such a man was Chief Muboya, certainly one of the bravest living Kikuyu, a dauntless loyalist all through the Emergency and so contemptuous of Mau Mau terrorists that he refused to live—as most chiefs did, on official orders—in a garrisoned post behind a moat full of stakes, and refused to take even reasonable precautions, dashing off to the scene of many

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

'Incidents', revolver in hand, to engage gangs in battle with his enthusiastic Home Guard.

He does not look a fire-eater, but seems a quiet, reserved, courteous, modest man of middle age and plain intelligence. It was in his location of North Tetu that the land consolidation movement started, before Mau Mau, and on the initiative of the people, not the Government. This was in 1948.

Indirectly, the movement arose partly because many of the Kikuyu from Tetu, a region that had always taken great pride in its cattle, had worked on nearby European stock farms, and subsequently bought exotic cattle which gave much higher yields than their own. This led to a demand for dips, and then to the spontaneous paddocking of grazing land so as to keep Better Cows free from ticks. So popular did paddocking become that the Veterinary department established nurseries from which those who dipped their cattle could take lei-apple seedlings free of charge—the lei-apple is a prickly, straggling plant that will make a good stock-proof hedge.

So enclosure started in the Nyeri district, and brought with it a whole crop of new troubles. The boundaries of grazing land had never been clearly defined. The clan elders settled boundary disputes as best they could, but it soon became clear to everyone that some more permanent arrangement would have to be made. The whole idea of individual tenure on the European pattern, of one family owning one piece of land, had taken root.

It was here, in North Tetu, that land exchanges between bands of families began to take place, encouraged by Chief Muihaya. Under his resolute leadership, North Tetu is still in the van: nearly half the landowners work to farm plans, the highest proportion anywhere in the country. Then came Mau Mau, and all progress stopped for three years.

A state of emergency was declared on 20th October, 1955. By this time gangs of oath-takers were abroad, killing anyone who refused to join Mau Mau. Hots and schools went up in flames, no one's life was safe, crops went unplanted or were struggled out to feed the gangs, cattle were mutilated, killed or impounded as fines, and every available European

A NEW EARTH

(288)
(288)
(112) was drafted in to the administration or police, or to help form a Home Guard of Kikuyu loyalists. These men lived in moated forts under tall watch-towers in constant danger of attack, and were called out at frequent intervals to protect threatened points or chase terrorist gangs.

(112)
(288) The turning-point was possibly the decision, taken in 1954, to put the whole scattered population into villages. Since time immemorial, families had lived in homesteads apart from each other, each little cluster of huts screened by a thorn or split-log fence and approached by a winding path through bush or forest. From each homestead, women would emerge every morning to plod off to their various fragments of fields, babies on back and panga in hand. Privacy was the normal condition for Kikuyu families.

Now every family had to leave its private homestead for a barrack-like assemblage of huts set out in rows on a hill-top. Although in his heart everyone must have hated it, for the moment many were thankful because, for the first time since Mau Mau had started, they were able to sleep safely in their beds. By October, 1955, nearly a million men, women and children had moved from their homesteads into a total of 845 new villages.

This broke the back of the Emergency. The matter then became one of hunting down terrorist gangs who, while they still emerged to murder and pillage, had retreated to the forest and were gradually eroded away by fighting, desertion and surrender. With the capture of the leading forest gangster, Dedan Kimathi, in October, 1956, the fighting was virtually over and normal life in the main restored. Some changes were irreversible: the villages, for instance, remained.

v

(192)
(223)
(248) Land consolidation was resumed in 1954 on a new basis: the Government stepped in directly and made it an official concern. The agronomists had worked out in detail a system which they hoped could be applied throughout Kikuyuland, and the administration tried it out in several pilot schemes.

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

It worked so well that in 1955 they took on a small army of surveyors, measurers and clerks and launched major schemes in each of the three Kikuyu districts. 423
423
141

The enclosure and consolidation movement swept the country almost with the momentum and fervour of a religious revival. In each sub-location it started with a public meeting: until the people themselves decided that they wanted to consolidate, nothing was done. When everyone had agreed, the D.C. accepted their decision in open *baraza*. 'Once an area is declared,' reads a directive, 'consolidation takes priority over all other work. It is most important that this point is fully understood as it has been found that some officers will try to maintain their pet schemes.'

Pet schemes abandoned, the next stage was to form a large committee representing all the elders of the *nduri* concerned and to acknowledge it in open *baraza*. This committee proceeded to hear all disputes and to settle all the boundaries, both of the *nduri* land and of every right-holder. A good many individuals were in detention, but their wives or relatives looked after their interests. The committee also listed all the landless *abai*. 120
423
623

The Recording Officer then stepped in. He and his teams went forth with pegs and chains to measure every individual fragment and to compile a 'register of existing rights', which became the ground-plan of future developments. 'Fragment-gathering' went on at the same time. Measurers noted in an exercise book, against every right-holder's name, each of his fragments, their acreage, and a sketch of their shape. In the Fort Hall district one man actually had 108 fragments which added up to 14 acres—a record: the average in the Nyeri district was about eight fragments to a man. The measurers' sketch-books impressed me greatly with their neatness and, one assumed, accuracy. (804)

The committee of elders, at least thirty strong, accompanied the measurers and agreed on the ground the assessment of every man's fragment. All disputes went to an arbitration board, but disputes were rare. The only Kikuyu to suffer loss of land through Mau Mau were a few of the worst terrorists, whose holdings were forfeited: these amounted 692
571
423
425
672

A NEW EARTH

423
424
425
to 0.05 per cent of the whole. Their land was paid for, and devoted to public purposes, such as schools.

426
427
428
429
After fragment-gathering, each owner saw the exercise book and registered agreement with his thumb-print or signature; if he was dissatisfied, he took the matter to an arbitration board.

430
431
432
Then came the percentage cut, to ensure that all sacrifices of land needed for public purposes were shared equally by everyone. This system is plainly much fairer than our own. If some public authority wishes to build a nuclear power station on Mr. Smith's land, or run an arterial road through Mr. Brown's garden, it does so, and Smith and Brown are out of luck. But among the Kikuyu, all losses are equally shared.

After the percentage cut—generally about five per cent—a demarcation team took over. Their job was like fitting together a jigsaw puzzle whose pieces were the acreages of each landowner, and the completed puzzle a map of the sub-location. They had to mark out all the ~~shambas~~ on the ground. At the end, if demarcation teams had done their work successfully, each individual was left with his original acreage less the percentage cut, and a lot of pegs in the ground agreed with maps in the office. Probably none of this could have been done had the Kikuyu not moved into villages: no one would have agreed to leave his homestead. As it was, all the homesteads had been shifted, and it was a matter of dividing so many acres among so many people, according to the amounts they had before.

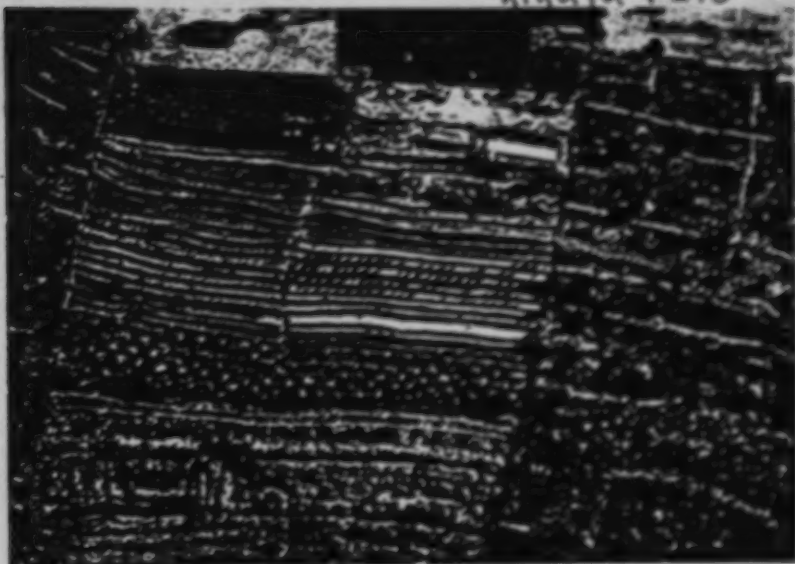
After demarcation came the planting of hedges, and then the holdings were registered. The final stage will be an aerial survey of the whole countryside and registration of title-deeds—an individual freehold title to land. The first issue of these permanent titles began in Kiambu on 15th October, 1959.

423
Administrators dread a landless population, and consider a smallholder with an acre or two to be a more stable citizen

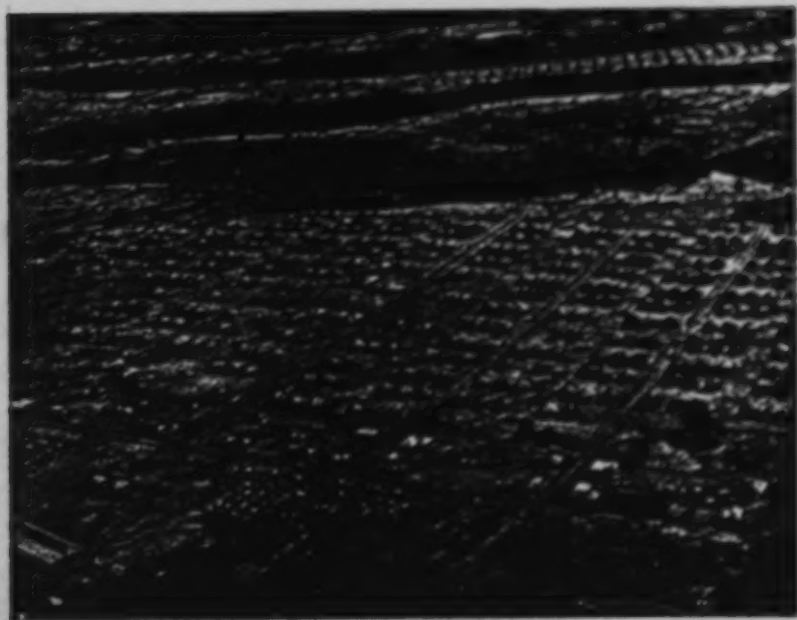
21:Huxley Q,T-5 (no date) 1960 FL11 Lao

KIKUYU FL10

311
361



29 A landscape transformed: terraced and consolidated farms in the Fort Hall district, and a new village on a ridge



[facing p. 240]

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

423 than a man with no land at all. Moreover he will have somewhere to go when he is old, and so will not become a charge on the community.

311
424
433
464 Agricolas, on the other hand, calculate that a given district will support more people, not less, if it is farmed properly, because, in order to achieve his larger output, the farmer will employ men. Mr. Roger Swynnerton has given this example to illustrate the point.

'If half the Nyeri district had twelve-acre holdings, the farmers would need to employ something of the order of 51,000 labourers. That is based on our experience of planned farms. If half the Nyeri district were developed to this extent, it would produce an income of about £64 per acre net—that includes coffee and cash crops—and the total net income of this district would be about £6 million, or thirty times as much as it is at present.

'If the other half of Nyeri were to be in six-acre holdings, it could be expected to produce an income of the order of £1.25 million, but it would not employ much labour. This is based on an output of £18 an acre. If the Nyeri district were divided into four-acre holdings, about £6 per acre would be about the best one could expect, without employing any labour at all. The total income would then be about £1.25 million at best. To summarise: with half the district in large holdings and half in economic holdings, the total income would be approximately £8 million; whereas if it was split into four-acre holdings, it would be about £1.25 million.

[137] Nyeri district is about 322 square miles. Were half of this to be in twelve-acre holdings and half in six-acre holdings, together with employment for about 50,000 families, this district could carry something of the order of 460,000 people. If the district were to be in four-acre holdings, each supporting a family of eight, the population would be about 412,000—that is, about 50,000 less.

311
433 'One of the objects of our exercise at the present time is to provide means by which the population can live and produce economically. We cannot take the population too rapidly into industry and commerce, or into rural trades, because

21 Husley G.T.-5 (no date) 1960 FL-11 Leo

KIKUYU FL10

255
242
242
178



142
482
313
291



30 Kikuyu women will
carry wood for the
homestead on their backs;
but in a canning factory (above)
at Thika they are taking
to a new way of life

[Facing p. 241]

A NEW EARTH

311 we have to wait for that development to take place, and it
433 will be slow. We have no minerals behind us. So in the first
instance we must aim at supporting the people on the land
economically, while at the same time they contribute the most
they can to the wealth of the country.*

(164)
(438) I visited one of the twelve-acre farms working to a plan in
the Nyeri district, on which such calculations are based. The
owner employed five regular workers and nine casuals, and
sold off his holding quantities of coffee, bananas, potatoes,
milk, pork and beans. Using the ratio of three casual workers
to one regular, these twelve acres provided a livelihood for
eight families, and yielded, as well, £550 worth of produce
to feed others, and to swell the country's wealth.

(464) Had these twelve acres been split into two-acre plots, said
the agriculturist, they would have supported six instead of eight
families, and produced very little surplus as a contribution
to the general economy. Were all the land in the Kikuyu
districts to be fully developed, labour (they calculate) would
actually be drawn into the area and the unemployment
problem vanish—that is, if all the unemployed would agree
to work on the land.

VII

(177)
(418)
423 Were economic facts the only ones, the authorities would
have refused to register any fragment below four acres, or
whatever was thought to be the minimum, in each ecological
zone, on which a family could make a decent living.† But the
Government, as we have seen before, takes the view that, in
the last resort, it cannot go against the people's wishes in

(113) *Kenya Legislative Council proceedings, 29rd April, 1959.

(241)
(137)
(311) †Agriculturists have divided Kikuyu country into four ecological zones,
depending on altitude, viz.: (1) High bracken zone, with acid soil,
suitable for sheep, dairying, pyrethrum and tea; (2) Kikuyu grass zone,
suitable for dairying, pigs, potatoes and coffee; (3) Star-grass zone,
suitable for a wide range of crops, the main coffee belt; (4) Grass woodland
zone, suitable for ranching, pineapples and tobacco. The size of the
minimum economic unit varies in each zone. In (1) it is generally 12 acres,
in (2) six acres, in (3) four acres and in (4) 15-20 acres. In all zones, half
the acreage should generally be under grass at any given time. Over-
cultivation leads (among other things) to serious losses due to eelworm.

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

regard to their own land. The Kikuyu have wished for land consolidation, and the Government has provided a system by which it has been brought about; they have wished for individual tenure, and the Government has registered their holdings. But at present they do not wish either to abolish small, uneconomic holdings, or to prevent the breaking up of larger ones on the owner's death. 197
423
408

On this last point, the Kikuyu are somewhat uncertain. Many realize that to allow fragmentation to arise again, as it certainly will if they do not themselves change drastically their whole system of inheritance, would undo all the good that has been done in the last five years. They are against this: but not yet, with individual exceptions, quite prepared to prevent it where their own children are concerned. They are rather like British Socialists who send their own sons to public schools. They are against the system, but so long as it is there want their own children to enjoy its benefits. 197
423
424

On their decision in the next few years, the ultimate outcome of this revolution will depend. Unless they bring their system of inheritance into line, the great potential of their country will never be realized. Agronomists hope that enough of their number have grasped the magnitude of the opportunity to swing the balance against the break-up of the new registered holdings into fragments through inheritance. They hope, but they cannot be sure.

If all the Kikuyu districts were properly developed and farmed, agronomists reckon, their output could be increased twentyfold. This seems a fantastic figure, but I was assured it was a sober estimate. Twenty times as much wealth coming from a smiling and a stabilized land, employment for everyone and to spare, a secondary population living off and serving the farmers. . . . The agronomists have all the best arguments, but whether they will be able to put them across remains to be seen. A directive issued from headquarters at Nyeri reads: 'No success can be expected if the farmer is made to do something against his will. Often it is necessary for a field or a house to be put in the wrong place owing to a whim of the African farmer—i.e. "grandfather died here", or "the spirits 433
648
423
361

A NEW EARTH

K1
48 of my ancestors say that no food must be planted in this area".
23 This we come across all the time. If we act against these
361 customs we may be sure of failure. Farm plans and farm
layouts are essentially voluntary and at all costs must remain
that way.

VIII

K
51
245
178 Most agriculturists have grasped their missionary spirit to
some pet project in which they see salvation. With Mr. Storrar
in the Rift Valley it is sheep; with Mr. Graham Gamble at
Nyeri it is tea. Not until thousands of acres of this table-topped,
glossy-leaved little shrub cover the fertile ridges of Kikuyu-
land, not until factories rise in dozens along the forest's edge,
not until a network of roads humming with leaf-transporting
lorries rings the mountain, will he be satisfied. And the
generating power of his single-minded energy has already
made the wheels begin to turn.

K
45
48 Nyeri is the first district to have a factory, built at a cost
of £85,000 from Swynnerton plan funds, entirely for African-
grown leaf. You still need a Land-Rover to reach it up the
slippery steep hills of the high bracken zone with its cold air,
clear streams and big mauve clumps of *senecio*, and it was
just as well we had one with us, for when we reached the
large impressive factory, standing all by itself under the
forest, the machinery had been silenced by a power cut. An
agriculturist removed our Land-Rover's battery and connected it
to a dynamo, and in a few minutes everything was revolving
again.

K
45 A tea factory smells clean and bitter and it is here that,
given good leaf, the mysteries of quality are wrought. The
Indian manager brewed for us specimen cups of his own
product and of various other teas, and challenged us to select
the one with the best flavour. Anxious as I was to be tactful,
I plumped for quite the wrong one: but the London market
knows better and just before my visit had paid six shillings a
pound for this Ragati tea, the top price for East Africa. Only
fifty acres are as yet in bearing out of 700 planted, but the
programme calls for annual plantings that will first supply

KiXUYU FL10
Kenya FL1

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

this factory, and then others due to be erected if the money can be found.*

Ki
245

Will it catch on? 'It's an exacting crop,' Mr. Gamble admitted. 'You must pay a lot of money for your stumps, wait four years, and when it's in bearing you can never leave it. Plucking goes on most of the year round and even when it lets up, there's the pruning. So tea will mean a lot more work, more regular work, than peasant farmers normally reckon on. But it pays. If they look after it properly they should get 1,200 pounds to the acre and this brings in about the same as coffee. One man has grown 1,400 pounds of made leaf an acre, higher than the European average at Kericho. The question is, whether they can keep it up.'

Ki
[444]
[433]

At present, leaf comes to this Ragati factory from as far as fifty miles away. There had just arrived a lorry designed to meet this unusual situation, fitted with a fan to start the withering process before the leaf reached the machines.

K
[494]
[401]

Quality is all: Mr. Gamble preaches this with a prophet's fervour. Quality starts on the third-of-an-acre plots where the Kikuyus must at present take everything on trust from instructors. The plucking of the leaf is all-important. Mr. Gamble dines in the maxim 'two-leaves-and-a-bud' at every lesson, and his instructors are trained to say to every plucker: 'The tips only—two leaves and a bud...'

IX

A tough, stern old chief called Murigo used to rule over this moist, green country where the Ragati tea factory now stands. He had led his fellow-warriors against the Masai, kept a retinue of wives, owned large herds of cattle, lived largely off beer and stood no nonsense. I met two of his many sons. One, also a chief, inhabits with three wives a white-washed house surrounded by oranges, limes and two acres of tea, planted as long ago as 1950 and protected from Mau Mau by a wire fence.

Ki
159
622
[595]

Ki
[595]
[245]

*Annual plantings should bring the area under African-grown tea to 12,000 acres by 1965. This will call for six to eight new factories. Up to 70,000 acres have been licensed on European estates, of which about half has been planted. Tea is now Kenya's second most valuable export, worth about £5 million a year. Coffee is worth over £10 million.

K
[434]

A NEW EARTH

159
622 Man by a guard post nearby. The other is an up-and-coming instructor with an eight-acre Better Farm planned according to the book.

361
778 Although, from his holding, a superb view of the mountain could be seen, Mr. Gari Murigo's tidy white house, set among salviae and cabbages, faced in the other direction—a break with tradition, for it used to be a custom universally observed to build your homestead with its door towards Mt. Kenya, the seat of God.

(821) 'There is too much wind in that direction,' Mr. Gari Murigo explained, but one might suspect a deeper significance. Jomo Kenyatta gave the title 'Facing Mount Kenya' to his eulogy of the old Kikuyu ways he sought to revive in a perverted fashion. Many battles were fought out on these ridges and many loyalists killed, including some of the Murigo family. In the siting of his house this loyalist son demonstrated his break with a tradition that had brought so much grief to his people. Sixteen of old Murigo's sons are now farming round about their father's resting-place.

798
823 One can understand a little of the Kikuyu feeling towards their mountain: it dominates every ridge and valley, wherever you look it is there, mighty and magnificent. You can easily imagine gods and heroes dwelling in its secret caves, and even conducted donkey-trips to the snow-line have not quite destroyed its mystery. Above a gathering of Better Farmers and their wives on the greensward in mild sunshine, beside a neat row of model pigsties thatched with banana leaves, it indifferently presided over our mundane talk of loans, prices and markets.

458
23
648
153 All these progressive farmers worried about markets; they had worked up their pigs and then prices had collapsed, as pig prices appear to do all over the world, and they did not understand it. No farmer, of course, ever does, but they felt they had been let down by the Government. And here is the big danger in positive official action to enrich the citizens: if things go wrong, latent suspicions come flooding back, bearing on their crest rumours of deliberate tricks to hold back the people. A collapse in coffee prices would lead inevitably to political unrest.

(245)

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

A young man in a green shirt who acted as spokesman for this group was an ex-Mau Mau detainee, of whom over 70,000 have been rehabilitated and reabsorbed in orderly fashion in the last two years—one of those achievements that no one applauded when it went smoothly, but everyone condemned when, at the very end, a blunder was made among the scrapings of the human barrel at Hola. 722
578
668

It is remarkable how quietly so many oath-takers and gangsters have settled back into normal life, and how little open friction there has been between them and the loyalists. But many bitter fruits lie only just beneath the surface and could erupt if the control of chiefs and District Councils were relaxed. It was a piece of good timing that, as the flow of detainees from the camps gathered momentum, so did the tempo of land consolidation and planning. The man from the camp returned to find a new spirit of hope abroad and new opportunities of employment—if he returned to the land. Those who drifted back to the overcrowded cities found few such opportunities, and it is from them that the restlessness has spread. (464)

X

More girls of the Kikuyu people than of any other pass through the secondary schools, some to continue to Makerere college, some to British and American universities; there is a Kikuyu woman Legislative Councillor; in general the women, when they overcome their diffidence, seem at least as alert and intelligent as the men. Yet nowhere in modern Africa, except among still-primitive tribes who have so far kept out of the way of Progress, do you see women used as beasts of burden quite as Kikuyu women are. 871
562

To carry things upon one's head is a custom universal in Africa, but Kikuyu women toil along like snails bent double under heavy loads of firewood, water, grain and potatoes borne on their backs, climbing hills most Europeans could barely get themselves up, let alone a hundredweight of maize or a forty-gallon drum of water. I saw a furniture removal headed by an old grandmother carrying an enormous table 462
482
562

A NEW EARTH

on her back—a light load, probably, in her estimation. Little girls of six or seven practise with a gourd of water or a bundle of sweet potato tops to feed the goats.

You never see a woman on a bicycle. Their working dress is generally a length of cotton cloth dyed earth-colour with ochre, like an old sack, caught in round the waist by a belt. Their heads are clean-shaven and rings of beads hang from their ears. The very steepness of their ridges holds them back, for tractors are ruled out, everything must still be done with hoe and janga, and that is the woman's task. Not that they need driving: they take a peasant's pride in their strength and capacity for toil and would not have it otherwise.

Most of the wives of Better Farmers, on the other hand, wear shapelike but often bright cotton dresses made by tailors who sit behind their treadle sewing-machines on the verandas of their shops in every trading centre. Many of these women belong to Maendeleo clubs, and quite a number have taken courses at one of the Farm Institutes.

'I did not want my husband to get rid of the old cows,' the wife of a Better Farmer said to me as we admired four Guernseys her husband had brought. 'Then I went to Wambugu, and that persuaded me.' Wambugu is one of the outstanding Farm Institutes, thanks largely to its former principal, Mr. Paul Thiongo, whom I met at Embu. Here men and women take their courses separately, a hundred at a time. And here there is a pool of Guernseys issued at cost price to Better Farmers when they first arrive, so that man and cow spend three weeks together under supervision, and then go off together to their farm. Wambugu has the only African-owned herd to be a member of the breed society, and last year the herd average was over 700 gallons. So the best Guernsey blood that can be had is being spread about the Nyeri district and a main preoccupation of vets and agriculturists is to see that the resulting progeny is properly reared.

I remember especially a very old, toothless individual, his chin fringed with grey bristles, leading a calf on a string and stroking it possessively—his first by A.I., which he thought a splendid invention, but too expensive; and an

THE ENCLOSURE OF NYERI

elderly, pale, thin man who had worked for fifteen years in Nairobi as a driver, saved money and bought his holding bit by bit, who showed me with tremendous pride three contented high-grade heifers, hand-fed with Napier grass and lucerne, who were giving between them seven gallons a day which he sold for £8 a week to a local tea-shop. About 200,000 cattle are dipped or sprayed every week—a contrast from the Mau Mau times, when all dipping ceased.

Unless there is a wet-back, the old humped Zebu will eventually vanish from the Nyeri district to be replaced by Guernseys. The success of this bold experiment depends entirely on the people's ability to keep up a high standard of management. If they grow slack about spraying, about careful calf-rearing, about bull-calf castration, these fine-looking animals will deteriorate into weedy, degenerate beasts without either the hardiness of the Zebu or the high yields of the exotic. It is a gamble on Kikuyu common sense and energy, and on political stability.

In the last three years, this countryside has been transformed. Every hillside is terraced; almost every field lies on the contour; gullies are scaled; coffee trees stand like soldiers on parade, pruned and mulched. Butter-yellow cattle graze on emerald pastures; blue-shirted children swarm in the innumerable schools. Gone are the mushroom huts lurking behind groves of bananas, the higgledy-piggledy shambas, the goat-browed aromatic bush.

Gone too are the menaced guard-posts, the high watch-towers, the armed patrols, the barbed-wire barricades of only five years ago. What had become, I asked, of those deep moats bristling with pointed stakes, like a mouthful of wicked fangs? Stripped of the stakes, many of them had been used to grow bananas. Swords into ploughshares, knives into pruning-hooks, moats into banana-trenches.

CHAPTER 16

Towards Subtopia

1

115 THE oldest living chief in Kenya is Njoi, who was
622 appointed to his office in 1912. Such men, who grew to
manhood in a world unchanged for centuries, are almost
legendary; soon the last will be gone, and it is a tragedy
that no one has taken down from their own mouths recollections which are a part of history.

It was evening when I called on Senior Chief Njoi at his home just below the forest, nearly 8,000 feet up and very cold; he had not been well, but came out to see me on his veranda, muffled in an army greatcoat, and while we talked one of his wives stood motionless behind his chair, a silent sentinel. The old man's bronze, leathery face was lined like the map of a watershed, and there was no mistaking the rock-like character, the habit of command, the force of personality. His eyes were sharp, there was nothing doddering about his quiet and cogent answers to the few questions I put. All through the Mau Mau revolt he kept his district loyal and, although it borders on the forest, the gangs failed to draw from it their expected quota of recruitment, food and support.

178 I asked his views on the great changes that had come to
829 his country. 'They are good,' he said, 'except for two things:
669 they oblige people to move away from their fathers' home-
661 steads, leaving the inheritance of their ancestors; and there
578 is too much bribery among the staff, among recorders and
425 measurers. And this bribery goes against the loyalists; they
668 resisted Mau Mau and now, in many cases, the Mau Mau
668 have taken some of their land.'

How much truth is there in this? Administrators are inclined to discount it; many loyalists, they say, expected to be rewarded for their staunchness to the Government by

178
829
669
661
578
425
668
668
668
425
668
703

TOWARDS SUBTOPIA

receiving forfeited land. But it has not been the Government's policy to confiscate land, except from a very few of the gang leaders, and detainees have been treated in exactly the same way as loyal Home Guards. 668
648
622
602
582
562

This is a policy that men of the older generation, like Njiri, cannot understand. Their code holds that loyalty should be rewarded and rebellion punished. So they feel aggrieved when loyalists are not rewarded in this obvious way—or indeed in any other way, except for a few medals: and even medals do not seem to mean much, for a man from this district who received one for gallantry, and risked his life many times in defiance of Mau Mau, was subsequently imprisoned for two years because he assaulted a detainee who had defied him in a camp in which he exercised some authority. British justice, as so often happens, did not in this instance accord with Kikuyu idraa. Here is an example of a fundamental cleavage in outlook between the races that goes much deeper than questions of constitutions, electoral rolls and social benefits: it strikes at the very roots of trust and respect.

As to bribery, most administrators admit that it goes on 661 in spite of every precaution they can think of to prevent it, but on a scale which does not materially affect the final distribution of land.

Customs must change, Chief Njiri agreed; old ways were 198 dying; did he think that, on balance, the new ways were 648 better for his people?

'Old customs were good,' he said, looking back to days of (891) order, simplicity and adventure, 'but education is good also, because it will teach a man how to speak alike to Europeans and to Kikuyu; it is a bridge between the two. There was no bridge in the old days. We must understand each other.' Although he was born into a world in which no woman 821 could address a man as an equal, he has given some of his 622 own land and money to start a girls' school nearby. One of 562 his many sons returned the other day from America with a university degree and a wife.

A NEW EARTH

II

198 Njati spoke in Kikuyu, and the Kikuyu agricons who
157 interpreted had not long returned from eleven years' study
at the University of Allahabad. Here were old and new
personified: the quiet elder with his enormous dignity, a tree
rooted in the deep, stable soil of tribalism, and the well-
educated, intelligent young graduate with his air of pushed
diffidence, his roots grasping through the shallow soil of
transition. Perhaps, when he is old, he will regain that calm
certainty of which he has been robbed by the onset of a
thousand possibilities and doubts swarming round him and his
fellows like angry bees.

(186) 'The poverty of India?' he exclaimed, and shook his head
despairingly. 'We have nothing like that here. But we must
be careful—it is something that could happen, if we fail to
take care of our land.'

668 Now a confirmed agricon, he had been at school with
178 some of the Kikuyu political leaders and one, he said, had
come to visit him the other day. 'I tried to tell him what we
are doing here, but he wouldn't listen. He stood in the middle
of one of the villages and said: "Are there any complaints
against the Government? Is anyone not satisfied?" There are
always people who are not satisfied. A fortnight after he left,
the D.C. had to close the coffee factory in that area because
the people were refusing to obey the rules. How can this help
the Kikuyu people? All this man was doing was to try to
make a position for himself. We used to be friends, but now
we have agreed to go in different ways.'

He spoke sadly, for no Kikuyu of his generation could
repudiate the aims of nationalism. It is the methods that
divide men of the cities from men of the land, who need
security. As yet there is no leader able to combine the two.

III

000 About half the adult males of the Fort Hall district are
away at any given time either at work, or seeking it. On